

Think: Dog 2045

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I roused, feeling the porcelain kiss of cold tiles on my cheek. My knee was sore and bruised; my eyes difficult to open. Each blink barely sharpened my vision at all. White. Everything was bright white, refracted through thick transparent reinforced-plastic bars. I groaned and lifted my head sideways away from the cold ground – my cheek peeling slowly from the tiles. Angling around to get my bearings, I realised I couldn't move my arms to help right myself. They were bound behind my back. I wriggled onto my front, contracting my body like a worm and then raised up to my knees. Scanning my aching frame, I realised I was wearing a body-hugging white elastane vest and shorts. I was dressed like some kind of test subject.

Silence but for the hum of some non-descript machinery in the corner of the room. I blinked a few more times to clear the haze and peered. No use – the interface panels were all closed, and I couldn't discern what kind of machines they were from the outer casing. Pivoting, I saw – I was in a cylindrical cage. The clear plastic bars started at the ceiling and formed a circle around me, disappearing into ground fixtures between the tiles. I felt and *heard* my heart beating faster, a loud drumbeat set against the ambient hum of my prison.

“Help!”

I knew that whoever had put me here would likely not allow for the possibility of a good Samaritan to chance upon my predicament and save me. Even so, the human panic response is illogical at the best of times.

“Someone! Help! Arnold!? Anyone?! Fuck sake. Please? Arnold?!”

I felt that horrible sensation. So predictable. Next came the tears, welling up and streaming forth from my eyes like the pathetic animal I am. For all my words and human sense of agency, I was at the mercy of my biology – just as we *all* are. I started to sob out loud.

“C. D. G. Dash. D. One. Seven. Begin.”

My break-down was interrupted. I sniffed and swallowed the mucus in my throat as the sterile, robotic voice pierced the hum. I heard the whiz of mechanical motors and craned my head directly upward to see the ceiling of my cell rotating; opening in concentric spirals. I could feel it rising in me again.

“Help! Someone, please help me! Arnold?!”

Pitiful. I choked my words back and stared at the growing round gap above me. A sudden swoosh and the sucking sound of a vacuum seal forming echoed out as I nervously flinched in surprise.

Transparent panes had shot from the tiled ground and filled the gaps between the bars of my cage. I felt my face tingle and knew I was reaching my threshold – my head woozy and darkness encroaching at the sides of my sight. I shot a glance upward again, the tunnel vision perfectly framing the dark circular void in the ceiling as a small, white sphere descended from it.

“Wha-what is... what the fuck... is that...”

I mumbled some feverish nonsense as the sphere lowered toward me. It halted about a metre above my head, roughly equidistant between the ground and ceiling of the cage. My hips rotated, and I rocked forward onto my heels, hands still bound. Slowly, I stood – fighting the faintness I felt so that I could peer closer. My eyes reached level with the sphere and without hands to use, I leant in and rubbed my cheek against it. I heard a muffled click right next to my ear and recoiled from the grainy matt-textured orb.

Small indentations had appeared, arranging themselves in a chaotic geometry all over its surface. I motioned to run my cheek over it once more. And stopped. The whispering sound of air escaping tickled my ear drum and grew stronger. I managed to take a step back before my vision was drowned in a thin grey mist, hissing out at every angle from the sphere’s etchings. It filled up my air-tight circular prison.

I fell to my knees and slumped onto my side once more, crawling up against the clear plastic ‘wall’. I held my breath for an age. The hissing continued. I clamped my lips shut, but my nose was betraying me. I couldn’t pinch it. I felt the mist tickle my nostrils. I coughed and gasped.

“Arnol...-?”

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“Remember the cure for cancer?”

“Huh?” I groggily replied, watching the viscous foam on my dinner tray expand to approximate the look of a chicken breast.

“Elephants.”

“Oh wow”, I exclaimed while yawning. “I wouldn’t have guessed that...”

The spherical dinner-synthesiser rotated and twizzled its armoury of nozzles, aiming and spraying a thin mist over the chicken. It took on a glazed appearance and was soon covered in gravy. I sidestepped to the next counter.

“I know! They look so old with those grey wrinkles – who’d have thought?! That’s the amazing thing though – so much can be achieved with CDG and there’s a wealth of animals we can utilise. We’re like kids at the pick’n’mix!”

“You mean the twist and spray, yeah?” I cynically retorted.

“Turn of phrase”, Arnold wearily batted back – squinting a little. “Point is... This is a *great* place to be right now!”

I grunted in agreement, watching as an automated spatula slapped a mound of mashed potatoes onto the tray, splashing my trousers with a few chunks of buttery pulp.

“Hasn’t someone found a better way to serve potato yet?! Jesus Christ!” I stepped back, flicking at the mess in exasperation.

Arnold guffawed, “Some things just can’t be finessed, buddy! And ‘Jesus Christ’?! Now who’s getting nostalgic, huh?”

Licking my finger and rubbing the stains at my crotch, I grimaced and laughed too before grabbing my tray and following Arnold to the translucent lunch booth.

I gluttonously devoured the delicious meat and chomped down my potatoes with exaggerated gnashing motions, as if seizing the opportunity for revenge on them. Arnold chattered away all the

while, pitching some grand plan – or inviting me to some unlikely event – or... whatever other blue-sky nonsense. He was a fun guy and an asset to know in the office, but wow – such a dreamer. I wiped my mouth with my shirt sleeve and twanged the food residue back toward my tray – watching as it slid cleanly from the nanofiber cotton weave.

“Aahhh – delicious!” I let loose a contented sigh. “So, what’re you talking about Arnold? Some trip to head office?”

“You make it sound boring, but... yes! It’s a colleague engagement-type thing and a crazy opportunity to try out some of the latest product!” Arnold’s eyes became electric as he waved his hands about in support of the idea.

“Try out the product? Are you mad? Ever heard of ‘sell it, don’t snort it’?”

Arnold’s arms drooped to rest on the table, his chin bunching up as he replied in a deflated tone, “But Scott... it’s not cocaine or *anything* like that.”

“No! It’s worse! You’ve seen those old adverts, right? ‘*Dog for a day! Take a cat-nap! Fly like a... fucking bird!*’ Yeah?!” I lowered my voice as I noticed the blurry outlines of people in a nearby booth putting their forks down and staring into ours, “Look, Arnold. Those ads all looked pretty cringe – but most of all – they made it seem tame. People were spiking friends, family... their partners. It was all some big laugh, until the reports started coming out.”

“I know. But...”

“Do you?! ‘Cos there’s a reason the pay is so fucking generous here, man. It’s because this company is morally *grey* at best.”

“They cured cancer, Scott.”

“*After*. They cured cancer seven years *after* they were fined billions and prohibited from trading in most of the western world! It was *only* coming up with that cure that got them off the prohibitions register.”

“Fine! I get it. But why do you care? We were barely even born at the time. And you work here anyway, so it’s kind of hypocritical!”

I felt my whole body tense up as I reminded myself that my reaction must seem strange. How could Arnold possibly know my history with this damned company? I drew a long breath in through my

nostrils and placed my fingers at my temples, letting them slowly slide down the sides of my face.

“Sorry. I don’t want to get into it. But, actually... you’re right – it *is* a great opportunity.”

“Crazy.”

“Honestly, I’m not – I just said I don’t want to get into...”

“No. I said it’s a *crazy* opportunity!” Arnold’s eyes lit up with that fierce spark once more. “So, you’ll come?!”

“I’ll come. Got to make sure the higher-ups aren’t behaving *exactly* like kids at the ‘pick’n’mix, right? But no promises I’m trying any of that crap.”

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I woke the same way as when you hit the ground after falling off the top of some tall building in your dream. My hands were still tied, and the floor-tiles were still cold.

The mist?! I rolled onto my back and looked up. Nothing. No gap in the ceiling.

Feeling relieved, I allowed my focus to slowly track around the room once more. Only the clear bars remained – the panes of plastic had retracted. The machines were still there, humming ominously. Phew. I let out a breath I hadn’t realised I was holding. Was this... head office?

A small squeak gave way to a clockwork grinding noise behind me. I span, still on my back – kicking the floor with my heels to turn. A crevice had opened between two large white wall tiles – a door?

“Hello?”

I kicked myself. *Why* would you call out to whoever is behind a mystery door when you’ve been captured and are being held in a cage? Desperation again? Fuck it.

“Hello?!”

“Hello.” A softly spoken and calming voice responded in monotone, “Hello Scott. Pleased to meet you.”

Stepping out from behind the thick white door and closing it perfectly shut once more as if it had never existed, the figure stood in a white full-body quarantine-style suit. The mask was frosted, and I couldn't make out the features of her face through it, but her voice was feminine. I felt rage at my imprisonment.

"Not exactly *meeting* you though, am I? Take off that mask."

"No, Scott. I can't do that."

"Why am I here? Is this head office? Who are you?"

"How much do you remember?" The figure reached into a ziplined pocket and grasped a glass tablet and stylus, poised to record my answer.

"Fuck you."

"It's important, Scott. What do you remember?"

"Scott?" I let my eyes track downward for a second as I thought. My name *is* Scott. But why did it sound unfamiliar for a moment there? "What the fuck was that mist?! Why did you gas me to sleep?! What did you do to me?!"

"That mist was a standard quarantine procedure, to cleanse you. You weren't 'gassed', you simply fainted."

I felt a little embarrassed and snapped back, "No I couldn't have! It was--"

"There's no shame in it. You were involved in an accident and sustained massive head trauma. You probably don't remember, but you were exposed to high levels of a new strain of..."

"Head trauma?! I'm in... quarantine? I... I don't..."

"Sshhh, Scott. We can let you out soon. We just need to treat you first and make sure you're not contagious."

I searched my brain furiously. It was... true. I didn't remember much of anything. I hadn't even questioned it before now, because, well – it didn't feel like there was *anything* to question. How had I gotten here?

The frost-faced figure approached and knelt down by the bars of my cage, fishing in another ziplined pocket. She retrieved a small container and popped its lid, extending a single purple pill out on her plastic-coated hand and into my cage. I rose to my knees and faced her.

“Why are my hands tied, Miss...?”

“Not Miss. Or Mrs. Just Karen.”

“Why are my hands tied behind my back, Karen?”

“Given the circumstances, we didn’t know how you might react when you came to. It’s for your safety.”

“Very kind. As you can see, memory aside – I’m fine and safe. So – please – untie me.” I turned my body to the side, offering access to the bindings.

“Take the medicine, Scott.”

“And then you’ll untie me?”

“Yes.”

Though sceptical, I leaned my head forward and tongued the pill into my mouth, accepting the glass of water that Karen tilted toward me and swilling it down.

I gulped and spoke, “Ok, now please untie me.”

“You’ll have to wait a little longer, Scott.”

“What, but you said...!”

“*Just* to ensure the medicine is taking effect.”

I voiced a disgruntled harrumph and watched as Karen turned away, exiting the room via the same thick white door. Just as the door was about to melt back into the white tiled wall, I heard her soft voice simper from beyond it.

“I’ll be back soon Scott. Just be a good boy and rest.”

Her tone was so mellow I almost felt like I could rest my head on her words like a pillow – it felt soothing. But I had already slept for too long. I needed to work on remembering how I got here. I steeled my resolve and stopped my hips from fidgeting, only just realising that I had been wiggling my restless behind ever since Karen left the room.

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I was jolted awake as the air-hockey-like hum of the hovering mag-bus was interrupted by a clatter of pebbles on aluminium alloy. I propped my heavy head up with my hand, lazily balancing my elbow on the window for support. The global upgrade to mag-roads had been rolled out everywhere and tyres had been all but replaced – *definitely* on corporate and public transport. It was a supranational environmental initiative that made it more hassle than it's worth to own an old 'tired junker'. There were only a few left, and they were privately owned by collectors. Point is, *that* clattering sound shouldn't be possible.

The bus jounced again, and my elbow fell from the window, causing my head to bang hard against it.

"Fuck sake", I grumbled – rebuilding my hand-pillow and letting my eyelids droop again.

"Scott! You feel that?!" Arnold piped up in a shrill voice, laced with wonder and much to my displeasure. I ignored him. "Scott! We're in a junker!"

"Huh?" The bus rocked again. Fuck it – I was awake now. "You can't drive them on the roads anymore, Arnold. We can't be."

"I know. We're not on a *road* though."

I opened my eyes fully and stood, only now noticing that everyone else on the bus had risen from their seats and plastered their eyes at the windows. I took it farther, clambering onto my seat and sticking my head out of the upper vent to get a better angle. There they were! Black rubber tyres, kicking up dust in a trail behind us. The mag-bus had deployed old-fashioned wheels and we were bouncing down a stony dirt track in the middle of nowhere. This was mad.

"Makes sense", I rationalised as I swapped positions with Arnold. He gawked at the mobile museum exhibit we were riding in.

"What about *this* makes sense?!" He shouted, head still dangling out of the window vent.

“That the head office would be completely isolated, off the mag-rail track – considering the company’s... history. There are still terrorist groups that would probably love to get at the place.” I explained, choosing my words carefully.

“Yeah, I guess. But I wonder why?” Arnold had returned to sitting, though he struggled to wipe the grin off his face every time the carriage shook.

“It’s the human cost, man. I’m not saying I support terrorism, but I understand their motivation. You *need* to remember – people lost their lives, all because the company cut corners at the testing phase to reach market quicker. Their families aren’t likely to just forget.”

“...” Arnold seemed stunned, the grin now absent, as he was jostled about in his seat.

“Marcus Pitch, transformed partially into a parrot and tried to fly off the top of a steep ravine on 22 February 2017. His bones hadn’t transformed yet to become hollow like a bird’s. He was too heavy, fell and died. Jessica Rouen became a python in mid-October the same year – ate a baby deer whole. It didn’t agree with her human digestive system when she changed back the next day. They tried to operate, but multiple internal organs had been ruptured. She died. Abigail Flint transformed into a grizzly bear and tore her own children limb from limb a couple months later – that was the final straw. Her trial damn near broke the justice system and there was no hiding for Good OG anymore. And my...”

I stopped myself and sniffed sharply. “Never mind.”

“Fucking hell, Scott.”

“I know. You still happy we’re on this little road trip?” I wryly smirked.

“No! I mean – yes, I’m still excited for it. And those things are all tragic, but... How do you know all that? I mean, you were reeling it off like *that* was the *short* version!”

“Oh right. That kind of *was* the short version. I’ve got an eidetic memory.”

“Like photographic?”

“Yep. I remember everything like a picture.”

“So – you’ve got VMR on tap?!”

“Visual Memory Recording? As in, the stuff they use to root through suspect’s heads in criminal cases? Weird comparison, but I guess so. It’s like an ethically sound, non-intrusive version of that, yeah.”

“Scott, man! That’s incredible!” Arnold looked at me like I had some kind of superpower. Of course, the way he was – he’d probably already started cooking up some haphazard scheme to make use of my ‘gift’.

“Pretty useful, yeah. It does mean that there are some things you can’t forget though, even if you’d prefer to... My dad had it too.”

I sniffed sharply again and thought I should probably change the subject. Just then, the clatter of dust and stones being kicked up against the bodywork gave way to gravelly crunching. The bus lumbered to a halt as Arnold and I both peered out of the window. We each had to stoop our necks down to view the entirety of the monolithic building erected in the dustbowl outside. It stretched toward the flat-blue sky, its apex shimmering in the heat like a mirage.

Rather than feeling impressed or intimidated, my eyes locked onto the huge red-lit logo, emblazoned about mid-way up the edifice. I stared at the words and felt a numbing disdain. I had made it to ‘Good OG’ headquarters.

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“C. D. G. Dash. D. One. Seven. Sample. One. Begin.”

I shook my head as I ‘came to’. But I hadn’t been asleep. I was staring blankly past the transparent bars of my circular cage and toward the portion of the white tiled wall which hid the thick door Karen had used. I closed my wide-open mouth, flinching as I bit my tongue by accident. The sudden pain made me fully alert as I noticed my hips settle down. I immediately felt a flush of embarrassment creep across my face as I realised I’d been sat, on my knees, tongue flapping from my mouth and wiggling my butt. My head instinctively span to check if anyone had seen me.

“Welcome back, Scott”. Karen’s words drifted out from where she was perched, near the whirring machines. Her curled, blonde hair rolled down over the white plastic quarantine suit while her icy blue eyes pierced my body up and down. She had removed the frosted helmet.

“Karen?! When did you come back...?!”

I was genuinely surprised and didn’t recall Karen coming back into the room. Even so, I acted up my shock, hoping to play for more time and catch a glimpse of the information on the user interface glass next to her. The machines’ display panes were open and might offer some hint as to what was going on!

“Well – a minute or so ago... I walked in through the door over there...” She pointed toward the seamless white tiles. “You looked at me with those cute eyes, so I let you know you’re a good boy and then walked over here.”

“You let me know I’m a... good...”

I parroted her words as I analysed them, still spending half my effort on staring at the interface glass but starting to feel strangely on edge as a restless energy built in my backside again. I struggled against the feeling but found that my mind started to cloud over the more I thought about the restlessness at my rump. That glass interface was too important! I put forth all my effort to reading its contents, firing off a vague question to distract Karen.

“Where’s your... helmet?” I didn’t even notice my head tilt inquisitively as I asked.

“Ah! Well the medicine seems to be taking effect as expected, so there’s no need for the helmet now. Speaking of which, I’ll keep my promise.”

Karen approached the transparent reinforced plastic bars and told me to turn around. I did without a thought, using the opportunity to sneak a clear look at the interface screens without provoking suspicion. She untied my hands, which began to ache as I shook off the atrophy and flexed them in front of me. The restless feeling returned in my rump. My arm hair seemed a little wild and there was a sore red patch around my wrists, but otherwise I was grateful to have my hands back. My ears perked up as I heard Karen giggle behind me.

“I see you’re happy to be untied! *Such* a good boy.”

“Obviously. And what is *that* meant to mean?!” I shot back with a rasp in my voice, annoyed at how good her patronising words made me feel.

“Oh Scott. Exactly what it sounds like. You’ll understand soon enough. Or maybe you won’t. That’s the crux of all this really. We’ll see.”

She ruminated aloud and I half-listened as I scanned the final pane of interface glass. For some reason, I was having a bit of trouble making sense of it – but knew that I just needed to take a mental picture, then I could piece it together later. Karen spoke again, while folding the machine interfaces shut, one by one.

“Either way, you’re progressing nicely for the first sample stage. I think we’ve got what we need.”

“Huh?” I honed back in on my conversation with Karen, feeling smug as I was sure I’d just about got what I needed from the glass interface. “And what have you *got* exactly?”

“I’ve already gone over the allotted interaction time for stage one, Scott. I’m at risk of jeopardising the controlled nature of the experiment. But I’ll be back. Sit tight.”

“But... Karen! Wait! Where’s Arnold?” I shouted through my confusion as she exited past the white tiles, noticing a bizarre feeling of contentedness, spreading slowly like an encroaching tide through my mind. I felt my eyes glazing over a little and looked down at myself. I was sat upright on my knees, with my hands clenched, resting neatly in front me. ‘Strange’, I thought – it wasn’t exactly comfortable. But worse still, I caught myself shaking my butt back and forth... again. I couldn’t even remember when it had started. How long had I gone before noticing it?

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The entrance plaza was vast, an open-air funnel reaching up into the sky and cordoned off on six sides by hexagonal glass walls which housed labs, offices and who knows what. An ornate garden with convex red bridges took up most of the space behind the reception desk, which sat under a glass dome – presumably for when it rained. It was... beautiful – furnished with notched palms, lace-leaf, bamboo orchids and a plethora of other colourfully interwoven plant life.

Arnold and I spent the entire security process staring at the majesty of it all, while our possessions were screened and confiscated. All communication devices and anything that could be used to record video were taken to be ‘held in abeyance pending departure of the premises and due

inspection for contraband media'. They even took Arnold's glasses, despite the camera quality being like an old polaroid, and gave him some temporary contacts to wear during the visit.

I wasn't surprised. If anything, this confirmed it – all the censorship and paranoia... Good OG must have something to hide. They could take my cameras, but I still had my eyes.

A curly blonde-haired lady with piercing blue eyes and a sweet voice soon appeared with a tablet and offered to chaperone Arnold and myself. Our colleagues from the bus all paired up and were led off in different directions by similarly white-coated scientist-looking types. Arnold acted like my accomplice without even meaning to, firing off question after question – keeping the lady busy while I searched and combed every surface or screen we passed by for intel. We walked what must have been a mile or more through winding white tunnels, past bustling IT spaces, breakout rooms, sterile laboratories. Arnold continued ceaselessly.

"Wow, okay, interesting. And Karen, what are some of the new CDG applications the company is working on right now?"

Karen smiled and tapped her tablet as she spoke, "Another *great* question, Arnold. Timely too, as we're just arriving at the testing wing. Shall we take a look?"

"Yes please!"

Karen tapped the tablet once more, prompting a nearby door to whizz open. She gestured for us to enter.

"Whoa! Incredible!" Arnold's eyes were practically rolling back in their sockets from the spectacle of it all as we stood, tracking the diminishing lines of a kilometre-long white-tiled corridor, with hundreds of glass rooms branching off from it. Each one was filled with people, machines and scientists.

"I know", Karen smirked, stepping in front of us. "Let's take a walk."

As we trekked down the corridor, peering into each transparent testing lab, the scale of Good OG's ambition became clear. Between Karen reeling off the official rhetoric in propaganda broadcast fashion, and Arnold's 'oo-ing' and 'ah-ing', I wanted to puke.

Still, some of the applications were undeniably alluring. There was explosive strength enhancement through gorilla DNA, metabolic regulation via sloths or rodents, depending on the desired effect, and

night vision from cats. There were even male sexual enhancement options from a variety of sources – notably a *huge* stallion in one tester’s case. Echo-location from bats, expedited language acquisition from lyrebirds, limb regeneration from lizards. The repertoire wasn’t without merit – though the ethics of some of the testing methods were already questionable.

“Karen, how do you assuage concerns over the ethical problems inherent in testing for abilities such as... limb regeneration, for example?”

Arnold’s eyes widened as I quizzed our host.

“An important point, Scott. In short – waivers and fantastic insurance!” She laughed and was soon joined by Arnold as I looked unimpressed. “But to seriously address the matter – we conduct extensive simulations on controlled samples prior to participant testing, in order to guarantee safety as far as is possible. From there, it’s up to the consent of the individual. And some people are just *thrilled* to be a part of what we’re doing here.”

“Hmm.” I wasn’t sold on her carefully crafted response, unlike my colleague.

“It must be difficult, knowing there’s so much we can achieve, but being restrained by anti-utilitarian and antiquated regulations” Arnold sympathised, eloquently and to my surprise.

“Indeed.” Karen paused before continuing. “But come on! Follow me and we’ll lighten the mood a little. You’ll love this!”

We walked further down the corridor, arriving at an empty glass room with a cushioned floor, two private booths and a few play-chests lined up against the walls. Karen asked us to take a seat at the desk stationed outside the room.

“What’s this room for?” I asked.

“Here” she placed her tablet on the desk and handed me a stylus, “This is a simple waiver which we need you to sign in order to take part in this section of the tour.”

“No.” I dropped the stylus on the desk and went to stand.

“Aww Scott! Come on man! Hey Karen, what is it anyway?”

“It’s a fully safe and licensed tester session of one of our most popular products, the canine experience. The official application is for treatment of chronic stress and related conditions, but its

harmless fun for anyone and we only administer a low dose here. It won't last longer than 15 minutes."

"Scott, that sounds incredible man! Let's do it!" I looked toward Arnold as he pleaded. I knew that the formula had been updated since Substance D-15-7. It should be safe.

"You can participate alone if your friend would like to wait outside, Arnold."

"No." I picked up the stylus again as I lowered myself back into the seat and signed the tablet.

"What's the harm in 15 minutes? Maybe I'll learn something."

I couldn't help but smile as Arnold's face lit up. Karen opened the see-through door and we entered.

"Okay, so what happens now?" I was starting to feel nervous. I knew I had to be wary. It could certainly be useful to see the effects for myself, but I wasn't here to play around. I needed to stay lucid and unearth the dark secrets in this place.

"First, take a seat – both of you, one in each booth." I followed her instructions and sat in darkness as she closed the metallic curtain behind me. "Now, you'll be shown a series of images with sounds and must press the green button whenever you see a picture which does *not* match the corresponding sound. This will establish a baseline. Ready?"

"Ready!" we both shouted from our booths in unison. It sounded simple enough.

The lights dimmed further in the booth as a curved screen flickered on in front of me. A picture of a man in a car flashed on screen, together with a revving engine noise. My hand hovered over the green button. A duck swimming on a pond and quacking. A woman drying her hair with the appropriate blowing sound. A police car with lit sirens and the sound of an ice-cream van. I pressed the button. A cow 'mooring'. Glass smashing. This was a joke. I carried on with the test, feeling almost irritated with how easy it was before the lights came up once more.

"Well done! Please exit the booths!"

"That was pretty fun. I think I got most of them!" Arnold squawked.

"Really? I'll be disappointed if I didn't get them *all*." I arrogantly retorted.

"Well, lucky for you competitive boys – that's not how it works anyway!" Karen interrupted and held out two miniature plastic cups, containing some small purple pills, fizzing in water. Arnold and I each took a cup.

“Now, while we wait for the pill to dissolve, let me explain. Obviously, you work at one of our satellite branches, so I’m sure you’ve grasped the basics, but just in case... These pills contain three main elements: genetic malleability agent, a psychoactive compound which acts as a catalyst, and the animal DNA package. All that’s required is for the recipient to *think* about the nature of the animal in question and the compound will release the DNA. Your bodies will then absorb it and, thanks to the malleability agent, temporarily adapt to the new parameters dictated by the foreign genetic code. Hence ‘Cognition-Directed Genetics’, or CDG.”

I nodded politely as Karen finished explaining and looked down into my cup. The pill had fizzed away into the water.

“Looks like we’re ready to go, Scott. On three?”

“Okay.”

Arnold counted to three and I watched out of the corner of my eye as he downed his cup, while I gulped down the contents of my own. Karen removed the empty vessels and I darted my glance around the room, expecting to feel the effects immediately, but there was... nothing.

“Right, boys – back into the booths please.”

As the curtain drew and the lights dimmed once more, I hovered my hand over the green button. A man in a car with the engine revving. Boring. A brass band with the sound of a trumpet playing. New, but uninspired. A man speaking on a podium with the sound of... a dog barking. I hesitated and then hit the green button. Why did I suddenly feel so shaken?

A jogger running down the street with the sound of footsteps. A water feature trickling. A dog bounding through a leafy forest clearing with the same sound of footsteps as the jogger. I didn’t press the button, then I did – but too late. The next image of a maraca had already appeared, complete with a rattling sound. I tried to shout, ‘that was a mistake!’ but my words came out all mangled.

“Rrr-at wrras a mistarrke!”

I started to feel sweaty and nervous. I couldn’t sit still. The images were flashing onto the screen too quickly and the sounds seemed jarring. A Hoover. And dogs barking? Pine trees. Howling wolves. A bushy tail and a human saying: ‘good dog’? Was that connected or not? I couldn’t think! I began

pressing the green button at random. Not long after, the lights came back on. I heard Karen's soft voice.

"Come on out, boys!"

I was relieved and went to swiftly exit the booth, instead tripping from my stool and onto the cushioned floor. I looked toward Arnold. He had made it out of the booth still on his feet but seemed to be struggling not to lean forward. I made a conscious effort to stand up straight, step by step. I knew I could do it if I just took it slow. I engaged my muscles and went through the motions – concentrating intensely.

There! I'd done it. I looked toward Karen – she seemed too tall. No! I was on my hands and knees! I couldn't fathom how to stand up normally.

"How does it feel, Scott?" She said as she returned my glance.

I went to respond and barely got a syllable out before noticing how off-pitch my voice sounded. My throat felt alien and wrong. Looking at Arnold, who had now fallen to his hands and knees too, I tried to remember Karen's explanation from before. Just by thinking about the animal? I imagined how I must look, down on all fours. Like a do-... NO! My tongue hung from my mouth and I began wagging an imaginary tail. It was impossible to resist – my DNA was being rewritten.

So, this is what dad went through? How could anyone possibly fight this?!

"Ruff!"

I barked and before I knew it, crawled over to Arnold and stuck my nose up against the seat of his trousers. He tried to get to my rear with his nose too, resulting in the two of us scampering around in a circle, both eager to smell each other. I sniffed and found out more about my colleague than I ever could have imagined.

He was feeling playful. Good. So was I. He was a little bit horny. Fuck sake – same here. And he was nervous too. But he'd seemed so excited? Why did he smell anxious? Just then I noticed myself mounting my colleague's rear and beginning to rub my groin against his coccyx.

"Now come on! Stop that!" Karen intervened, pulling me from Arnold's back. He didn't seem to mind and came over to me, licking my face. I responded in kind and barked happily at him. Karen retrieved a rope toy from one of the play-chests and threw it between us. We both took an end in our mouths and began pulling playfully. "That's better – play nicely. Good dogs!"

01/07/2045

I felt my ears twitch as I heard the noise of the thick white door thudding shut.

“C. D. G. Dash. D. One. Seven. Sample. Two. Begin.”

I'd been napping partially on my side, but with my forearms neatly together and contacting the floor to make a pillow for my head. My eyes opened as I raised my head from my hands to see Karen staring down at me, her quarantine suit now entirely replaced by a familiar white physician's coat. I felt my tongue extending from my mouth as I became excited to see her return. I quickly retracted it so I didn't embarrass myself when I spoke.

“Karen! I remember you!”

She looked worried for a second, then smiled. “Oh?”

“I remember the test where me and Arnold were...” I felt a twinge in my head as I was interrupted by my tongue struggling to extend and pant again. With some difficulty, I pulled it back into my mouth and continued. “...when we were acting like dogs.” I was distracted by another twinge atop my ears and a tickle like something was caught in my throat.

“Excellent, Scott! Yes! You two boys had such a good time!”

“Karen – *where* is Arnold?”

The frost-eyed woman walked across to the machines and popped open the glass interfaces once more before answering.

“He's safe, Scott. You shouldn't worry about-...”

“Why did you look so worried just then?”

“What?”

“When I said I remembered you. You looked worried. Almost scared.”

“Why would I-...”

“You tell me, Karen. What’s going on? Why am I still here? Where’s Arnold?! This is your last chance to be honest with me!” I hadn’t realised my face had contorted into an angry snarl, nose all wrinkled and baring my teeth.

“Or what, Scott?”

“Or I’ll sink this whole operation, Karen!” I growled. “I saw the interface glass. You’re still using Substance D-15-7, part of the original run of CDG drugs that were banned after all those deaths!”

“How can you prove that?”

I let my snarl soften into a smug grin. “I saw the interface glass, Karen. I saw all the components of the serum, together with the blueprints for the entire testing process. And I can replicate it all perfectly from memory – I don’t even need VMR! When I show the documents to the right people, that’ll be *it* for this damned company!”

“Very impressive. But who would listen to a dog?” Karen’s expression went blank.

“What the fuck are you on about?”

“Scott! Come on! You said you read the interface glass, you saw the process. Can’t you work it out? Or are you too far gone?” She looked at me, with pity in her eyes.

“I’m a... dog?” A jangling shock flew down both my forearms simultaneously, causing me to flinch as if my funny bone had been struck. I brought my arms up and looked down at them. My hair was thick, grey and white on the underside. It wasn’t hair. It was fur.

“You *will* be. Look at yourself.”

She pointed at my hands, which had automatically travelled back down to meet the floor, clenched like a set of paws in front of me as I sat on my knees. I faked out as I pieced it together. How could I be so stupid? It must be the mist... or the amnesia... or that medicine? It’s obvious that I’m becoming a – Argh! STOP. I reminded myself how it works. ‘Cognitively-Directed’. So long as I didn’t *think* about it, I would be okay. I forced myself up onto my two human feet and placed my open hands at my side.

“It’s too late. Look at how you respond, Scott... ‘Good dog’!”

Karen spoke slowly as if to demonstrate my plight to me. I heard her words and forced myself to stand stone still. I kept my mouth shut. NO panting. I kept my palms against my thighs. NO imagining I have paws. I kept wagging my butt from side to side. I was happy and – STOP!

Panic set in. I looked at Karen with watery eyes, still being jostled about by my restless rump. I could feel my hands clenching like paws again. As I looked at them, I saw my tongue dangling from my open maw. It was so difficult to think straight. I imagined running in a field, digging, chasing my... tail? Sniffing the other dogs. Being petted. Doing tricks. Being told I'm a good dog.

“Woof.”

A hushed involuntary release whispered past my lips. I slapped my clenched hand against my face to stop myself. I strained and unfolded my fingers, so I could better cover over my mouth.

“See? I'm sorry, Scott. Now I need to go. This wasn't exactly a standard sample, but I think we've got enough.” Karen folded the glass display panes shut and listlessly drifted toward the white door.

“You'll see Arnold soon.”

My hand still plastered over my mouth, a single tear pooled in the crevice where my palm met my cheek as Karen closed the thick, white door behind her. I was left shaken and trapped behind the clear bars, alone with just the white tiles and metallic hum for company. I felt a light pressure at the base of my spine and flexed my burgeoning tail-muscle to direct the freshly sprouted nub downwards. Had it been longer, my tail would have been trembling between my legs as I sobbed and whined.

29/06/2045

Arnold and I darted back and forth barking, playing tug of war with the rope-toy, pouncing on one another and behaving exactly like a couple of care-free dogs. My first lucid thought since the embarrassing realisation that we both smelled horny arrived an indeterminate amount of time later, while trying to scratch my ear with my 'back leg'. I just couldn't reach for some reason and began to question why. I was a dog, wasn't I?

In my frustration, I looked around to see Karen sat at the nearby desk, together with Arnold. My next human thought was why he was sat like a human when we'd been playing together a short time ago. I could hear them mumbling to each other but couldn't make out the topic – I hadn't gained the sensitive hearing of a dog apparently.

I concentrated as more of my human mind returned to me, the effects of the CDG pill waning. Slowly, facts and truths that had eluded me for the past twenty minutes began to seem obvious once more. Reflexes re-asserted themselves in place of my transient doggish mannerisms. I rose to two feet and stopped sniffing the air, clearing my throat as I approached the desk and spoke.

"Arf!"

"Ha! You okay, Scott?" Arnold looked at me, a smirk spreading across his surprised face. "Taking your time coming back to us, huh?"

I felt myself blush and cleared my throat again. I knew exactly what was going on. My eidetic memory was incredibly susceptible to the CDG formula – I 'remembered' the feeling and its triggers too vividly, causing it to reinforce the effect in my mind faster and recede more slowly. It had been the same for my father.

"Rrr-I'm good. Aghem-rrrff. Just a little lightheaded, being stood on two feet and all. Ruff. Ack-hem! Sorry." I battled through my sentence, hoping Karen didn't suspect the true cause of my delayed recovery – I'd come too far to be found out. My mind returned to locating incriminating evidence of the company's ethical breaches. "So, wrrf-what's next?"

"It's the bathroom for me, man!" Arnold shouted crudely. "I almost cocked my leg near the end there! Thought I'd wait until you came to and now I'm bursting. Don't thank me!"

He split off and ran for the restrooms down the hall, leaving Karen and I stood alone in the endless glass corridor, its hundred plus testing rooms a hive of bizarre activity as humans indulged all manner of animalistic delights. I thought I better make conversation, though I hoped I was done barking.

"Have you..." I felt in control again and continued, "Have you got... a favourite? Umm, animal experience?"

"Leave. Now." Karen looked directly into my pupils with her icy blue iris', speaking with a stifled urgency.

“Sorry?”

“I know why you’re here. I know about your father. Trust me, Scott. You need to get out of this place, now.” I was dumbfounded. Who the hell was this woman?! “I can’t help you unless you go! Now!”

“Who the hell are you, Karen?!”

“You’re Scott Carragher – Lucy and Max’s boy, yes?”

I furrowed my brows and slowly nodded.

“You *need* to go!... NOW!” She pushed me, hard. I took one last look at her piercing blue eyes as they glistened slightly in the fluorescent strip-lighting, then turned and ran toward the plaza.

“Hey... where’s... Scott?! Come back! Scott... where are you-...”

Arnold’s voice faded into the distance of the huge corridor behind me. Shit. I faltered and slowed down, thinking I should go back for him. As I turned, I saw Karen screaming and pointing.

“He’s getting away! Stop him!” she wailed.

Arnold had already been swallowed up by the approaching mass of faceless, back-suited security enforcers, clad in riot gear. Fuck! I was too late. My legs went numb with indecision. It took two seconds of eternity to process the logic of the situation. I couldn’t help him now. I needed... to...

I needed to RUN!

My feet tripped over themselves as I sprang back into full sprint. I could hear the heavy footsteps of the rabble in tandem close behind, but the open-sky plaza was coming into view. It wasn’t much farther. I could smell the luscious aroma of plants as red rotating siren-lights descended from uniformly installed ceiling cavities, painting the corridor a vicious shade of crimson. I was out of breath but flung myself forward and... fell.

My leg caught on a riot-stick which jutted out from beside the door-frame just as I reached the plaza, striking my kneecap and sending me toppling to the floor. I was immediately pinned down by two or more heavy-set men. I shouted and writhed around, powerless to escape. My vision was blocked by black fabric and clawing hands, but I could tell no-one was coming to help. I still screamed and fought.

“Give him the midazolam. Quickly. *Double.*”

A sharp sting pricked my upper arm. The pain became more pronounced as I struggled, until I felt my limbs turn to cotton wool. The skin around my eyes melted. My eyelids slammed closed. I stopped screaming and fighting and thinking.

01/07/2045

My tears pooled on the pristine white tiles of the cage floor. I reached an involuntarily clenched hand around to my behind, using my knuckles to fondle my small tail-nub as it tried to bury itself between my butt-cheeks. I heard my canine whines in-between sobbing.

“C. D. G. Dash. D. One. Seven. Sample. Three. Begin.”

The tell-tale thin crack in the unbroken white wall appeared, signalling the arrival of Karen. The door had barely opened an inch before I wiped my tears with my furry wrist and shouted toward it.

“Karen! There was no head trauma! I was drugged with midazolam! I remember everything!”

The door opened further, and a single boot stepped into the sterile room. I tilted my head, watching intently. The figure entered fully, shutting the door once more and turning to face me head on. My stubby tail tickled my butt cheeks as it sprang to life and I approached the bars to get a closer look.

It was... Arnold! Stood there, looking perfectly fine, wearing his usual glasses and... My tail fell dead-still once more; my high-pitched whine returned. He had a white physician’s coat on.

“*Everything?*” Arnold began to clap slowly, putting on a sarcastic tone. “Wow Scott! That’s amazing!”

I knew he was mocking me and automatically transitioned from whining to a snarling guttural growl, rumbling up from deep within my throat.

“Whoa, boy! Let me switch the bloody monitoring machines on first!” He nonchalantly sauntered past my cage and flipped the glass displays open, before turning back to me. “Looks like I’ve picked the right time to pay a visit. You’re turning out great! Look at that arm fur!”

“Grr-what the *fuck* is happening, Arnold? Grrfff.” I demanded, baring my now-sharper teeth.

“That’s obvious. You’re becoming a dog.” I winced as I felt the pressure at the base of my spine increase, as if in response to his statement. “The more pressing question is *why*, don’t you think? But we’ll get to that.”

“Don’t piss me arrrr-ound. If you’rrre a fake, then what’s yourrrf rrr-real name?!”

“It’s Arnold! I thought you remembered *everything*, Scott? Like when you splashed mashed potato on your trousers and growled in anger?” I shook my head and placed my paws – HANDS! I placed my hands at my temples.

“Ruff! That didn’t grr-happen!”

“Oh. What about when you stuck your head out of the mag-bus window, barking at the traffic?”

I doubled forward as the bulge at the seat of my white elastane shorts expanded. I could feel my growing tail bunching up and straining against the stretchy fabric. I growled out my discomfort as Arnold continued.

“No? Hmm. How about when you sniffed my butt and humped me, while wagging your tail like an excitable horny doggy? Good times!”

I gasped, blenching my hands from my head like they’d grazed a lit flame as I felt a sudden tickle. Craning them up once more, I pawed around the sides of my face and head – unable to locate my ears.

“Higher.”

I searched upward, fumbling and feeling out two pointed and satiny-furred triangles, planted on top of my skull.

“Got ‘em.” Arnold smiled.

“Grrr-ruff! Frrr-fuck off!”

I was becoming increasingly distressed and ever more lost in my mind. I knew Arnold was lying. But it didn't matter. His taunts were having the desired effect – I couldn't help but picture myself as the dog as he described in the false memories. And that caused the dog DNA to rewrite my own, more and more.

“CDG is *so* fun! Truly mind over matter, don't you think?” Arnold paused for a reaction, then continued without. “Okay, okay. Just one more. You remember the time you sat on command, panting and alert – because I *told* you to and you're a good obedient dog?”

“WOOF! Arf-rruff!” I turned away in shame as I was unable to control my barking, though my quarter-length tail could clearly be seen wagging around in my tight white shorts.

“No, of course. That one's yet to come. Isn't it, Scott? Ha ha!” Arnold walked around the clear plastic-barred cage and stood in my line of sight once more. I stared right through him with hollow despairing eyes. “Fine. I'm just messing with you anyway. And I better stop before things go too far! If I wanted you as a dog right away, I'd just stick you back in that doggy picture booth. Really did a number on you before, didn't it?”

I recalled the pictures I'd seen during the test session with the green button and shivered as my tail grew an inch or two longer. It had snagged a fold of fabric was now threatening to pull my white shorts down and expose my manhood if it sprouted out any farther.

“But, of course... it's because of your party trick, isn't it? That 'eidetic memory' you were so confident about. Same thing your dad had, right?”

I shot a fierce look at him, suppressing a growl in order to delay my transformation.

“And we've come full circle. This is the '*why*' part. I told you we'd come to it.”

“My memory?” I questioned, perking my ears up, but trying hard not to tilt my head as I did.

“Uh-huh. It was a marriage of convenience really. We needed test subjects with abnormal mental faculties and no family to miss them... You needed a way into our headquarters, to spy on us with your fancy photographic memory.” Arnold chuckled. “Then you could slay the corrupt corporate dragon and thus, avenge your poor parents? Am I right?”

I snapped, figuratively and literally. I thrust my arms through the plastic bars at Arnold and began gnashing at them with my sharp teeth. I continued to attack my cage in a frenzy as he calmly continued.

“Don’t be like that, Scott. You were out to get us. We just got you first. I don’t mind admitting that I’m not a fan of what happened to your parents, but still – it’s delivered you to us. And what we are doing here really *is* special.”

As I gnawed at the bars and flailed around, I could feel my bite getting stronger. Zeroing in on my plastic ‘prey’, I noticed my nose take up more prominent position in my visual field. It was tipped with black. Leathery, damp-looking black skin that was spreading as I snarled, growled and bit at the boundary of my prison.

With a humongous effort, I snorted in a huge cooling burst of air through my flared black nostrils and tried to calm myself, the rage gradually subsiding as my growl faded. Bringing myself under control, I pawed at my face with my clenched hands, stroking the short muzzle which had sprouted a dusting of grey fur before I’d managed to halt its growth.

“Well done Scott. You’re resisting admirably. I have something to show you.”

Nimble tapping out a sequence on the left-most glass display pane, Arnold let his hand rest in his coat pocket as the plastic bars of my cage suddenly sank into the white-tiled ground. I watched, stunned for a moment, before taking a wider stance – poised to lunge at him now that I was free.

“Ah ah! Think, Scott. *Think* about what I said earlier.”

I was done thinking. I didn’t care if ripping out his throat with my teeth cost me the last of my humanity. At this point, I had been betrayed, mocked, controlled and I had endured enough! I bore the fangs of my stubby muzzle and pounced forward, craning my jaws open as wide as they would go and aligning them to the pink flesh of Arnold’s neck. He sighed.

“SIT!”

Frozen mid-lunge, my snarl evaporated. I watched Arnold’s smarmy glare as I sank to the ground before him. My legs lowered me down to my knees, hands clenching and tucking together – touching the floor in front of me. My tail, now half fully-grown, strained to bash around at the back

of my shorts in pleasure as I obeyed. I drooled a little as my tongue hung over the edge of my lengthened lower jaw – panting while I puffed my chest out at attention.

“I warned you that one was yet to come... Good dog, Scott.”

“Arrff! Waff!” I barked happily, even as a tear leaked from my left eye and caught in the bristly fur now growing across my face.

“Now... let’s call a truce, before you’re more dog than man. I really want to show you what we’ve been up to. It’s the least I can do. Let’s shake on it. Paw?” Arnold held out his palm.

The muscles in my furry forearm vibrated with the exertion of my every ounce of willpower, straining to keep myself from performing tricks for this maniac. Regardless, my stiff hand juddered up from the ground and was soon placed in my captor’s palm. He gripped it and shook.

It felt conspicuously numb to the touch, and as I withdrew my wayward hand, I studied it to find that I now had the beginnings of tough black pads, callousing my palm. My fingers had shortened enough that without realising it, I was no longer needing to clench my hands for them to function as paws. They pretty much *were* paws. Large ones! This realisation caused my fingernails to narrow and darken before my eyes, becoming claws. My thumbs migrated away from my palm, shrinking to nearly nothing as they did.

“Scott!”

I broke the concentration on my paws and looked toward Arnold.

“Fuck sake, Scott. Stand up. On two feet, while you still can, and follow me. Please.” Arnold lowered his voice to a murmur while he slapped shut the glass interfaces. “And *don’t* make me have to say ‘heel’.”

I hated the fact he was right. I shakily rose to my feet and precariously followed my ex-colleague through the thick-white door.

19/11/2034

“Here, Max!”

The black, white and grey husky dog padded toward me, a chronic limp in his back leg slowing him down – even as he panted and wore a doggish grin. He placed his soft muzzle in the outstretched palms of my hands and licked at my skin twice to show affection. His breathing was laboured. A weak bark fell from his throat as he slumped to the floor.

“Wuff.”

“Good boy, Max! Good dog!”

He’d been slowing down for weeks now and I knew our time together was approaching its end. I felt my eyes welling up and tried to restrain my emotions, knowing full well that he had probably already smelled the salty droplets forming. I never knew him as a human. Only ever like this. But my mum had told me his memory worked the same way mine did, so I knew he must be in there somewhere. I watched as his bristly-grey overgrown eyebrows lowered, his eyes closing shut.

“You know I... love you. Right, dad?”

“Wuff!”

He forced a louder bark, without opening his eyes or stirring at all. I hugged his thick-furred body tightly, stroking up from the space between his eyes to the top of his head. I was only sixteen and didn’t feel ready for this.

I hadn’t felt ready the day they confirmed he had the normal lifespan of a dog either. That same evening, my mum took her own life. She blamed herself because she’d been the one to give him the drug – all as a bit of fun. I never blamed her, and I don’t think dad did either. She couldn’t have known.

I heard my dad cough faintly. His breathing became shallow and began to slow. I just kept on stroking his fur, even as it grew damp from my falling tears.

01/07/2045

As I awkwardly paced behind Arnold, leaning my padded hand-paws on the wall to keep balance, I scanned my surroundings intently. We were in a gigantic corridor, like the one Karen had led us through on the tour, except the glass testing chambers that lined its length were hidden by a translucent frost. This must be the restricted wing. No showing off the benevolent applications of Good OG's great panacea here.

This was the altar where people like my parents are sacrificed to turn a profit. Disgusting. I struggled forward and kept my rage in check, listening to Arnold's rhetoric.

"... so, as you know, we *did* cure cancer. Cognition-Directed Genetics is a miracle, to put it in antiquated fashion. But... as with any great leap forward, there are opposing views, unforeseen problems and casualties."

Arnold stopped momentarily to look at me, before carrying on.

"The strength of CDG, as we know it now, is in the targeted benefits which can be produced through correct layering of the drug's catalytic phases. Or rather, the types and duration of changes which result from the subject's thoughts. The problem remains, that every human *thinks* differently. So how can we adapt universal precautions? Look."

Arnold tapped his glass tablet and the translucent frost dissipated from the wall closest to where we stood, revealing a bare-white testing chamber. Inside, encircled by clear-plastic bars just as I had been, was a man sporting feline features on only one half of his body, split right down the middle. It was like someone had drawn a vertical line down his centre and everything to the right of it was furry, whiskered and clawed. Only one of his eyes had the cat's trademark slit-pupil framed with amber, the other was a normal human eye. Arnold piped up as I gawked.

"I know what you're wondering. Yes, he has a nice, long feline tail – but he can only sense touch on one half of it. Fascinating, don't you think?"

"What the hell did you do to him?"

"Just administered the CDG Cat-variant. Same potency drug that you've got in your system. Difference is – this man suffered with epilepsy and underwent drastic surgery to sever his corpus

callosum, the tissue which connects the two hemispheres of the brain. The right hemisphere accepted the drug, while the left did not.”

“But... why?”

“*Exactly*. We need to know. Imagine a scenario where one side of your body accepted the anti-cancer treatment, while the other half did not, simply because your brain was differently wired.”

“Yeah, I understand... but... what about him?” I nervously scratched at the fur which had sprouted underneath my white vest while I contemplated the morality of it all.

“He’s providing valuable data which we can *all* benefit from...” Arnold took a few steps forward and tapped his tablet again. “Look at this one. She has ADHD.”

The frosting faded to reveal a woman with sporadic patches of ginger fur, black on her hands and feet. She had a long bushy tail which looked like it had chunks ripped out of it. Her ears were on top of her head... but rounded like a human’s. She was stalking across the floor of her cage, sniffing and digging with her half-changed hands. I felt my tail sprout an inch or so longer in my shorts, responding to her almost-canine behaviour and making them noticeably tighter.

“She’s only half changed physically, but mentally... she’s a fully feral fox?” I questioned in disbelief.

“Yes. The thoughts are too far ahead of the body and the transformation has become desynchronised.” Arnold advanced again and tapped. “This one is autistic.”

Behind the glass stood a perfectly normal-looking man, but for his legs resembling those of a large goat, with cloven hooves instead of feet. He looked like a mythological creature as he opened his mouth and bleated loudly, to my surprise.

“So, his condition has caused the transformation to enter a repetitive cycle focusing on only a few aspects of the change? The same way autism promotes obsessive behaviour?”

“Very well-reasoned, Scott. We believe that to be true – but we need to run further tests. And that brings us to *you*.”

I suddenly realised I’d been entirely absorbed in the plight of these poor people – I’d almost forgotten that I was standing in the company of a morally corrupt maniac, my own body half-covered in fur.

“You have a unique brain too, Scott. Eidetic memory – it’s fascinating.”

“Maybe so, but you can’t keep me here – it’s unethical and-...” Arnold quickly cut me off.

“Our newer canine formulae simply rely on an extra-thick membrane built around the snapshot of human DNA we package into every dose to trigger the de-transformation. Though it’s more diluted as a result. In the pursuit of lasting effects, we revisited the old D-15-7 strain. But it poses a problem for some people that you’re too familiar with.”

I gritted my teeth together as Arnold alluded to my dad.

“The old method to induce the change back into human form relied upon the memories formed while experiencing the initial transformation being allowed to fade. As those memories were forgotten, the psychoactive compound would cease to be stimulated by the notion of new instincts and in turn, the dog DNA would no longer be catalysed, allowing your human DNA to re-assert itself. All of this would take place before the genetic malleability agent was broken down within the body...”

Arnold turned his eyes to the ceiling and exhaled as he spoke.

“In short, once you forget how you became a dog, you begin to slowly change back into a human. Our scientists at the time thought it was a fool-proof solution, given a canine’s innate penchant for carelessness.”

“But you didn’t test it fully, did you?” My expression was caught somewhere between anger and sadness as I wrinkled my small muzzle into a snarl and finished Arnold’s explanation for him. “I’m guessing that, for someone like my dad – by the time the memories of the transformation began to fade, the genetic malleability agent was way past its use-by date? So, it left him trapped in the body of a dog.”

“Yes, Scott. So, you *must* see why these tests are necessary? We need to make the formula universally safe.”

I looked back at the three glass chambers we’d walked by, the half-transformed creatures roaming around their sterile circular cages – and turned my vision to my feet.

“I believe we can obtain richer data if you help us willingly... instead of fighting. Will you help us, Scott? For Max and Lucy?”

I felt my nostrils flare wider and a pulling sensation start from the base of my nose. My tail grew another inch and swished left to right in jerking movements, paying no heed to the white elastane that restrained it. A shiver crept across every fur-coated patch of my body, as the bristles stood on end. I prised my gritted muzzle open to speak.

“Arnold...”

I took a step closer and slowly brought my glare up to meet my ‘friend’s’ face.

“Grrghf-*FUCK* you!”

I lunged forward with my sharp teeth as Arnold threw his hand up between us in defence and clamped down on it, sinking my jaws into his flesh and tasting his blood as it coated my mouth. I violently thrashed my head around, tearing at the man’s soft ligaments with my vicious bite. Blood splattered the floor and Arnold’s scream could be heard slowly morphing into words.

“Acccchhhhrgh!! You *fuckin*g... Argh! DOWN!”

My triangular ears twitched and flattened to my head. I stopped my assault immediately, releasing Arnold’s mangled hand from my vice-grip, and felt my legs buckle. I fell to the ground, my paws and forearms hugging the floor while my legs sprawled out behind me. I kept my eyes trained on Arnold, growling and drooling his blood as I was forced belly-down into submission by his command.

“*Son of a...* ack!” Arnold’s face scrunched up with pain as he clutched the blood-soaked hand. His eyes clouded with a frenzied vengeance, dilating, dark and wild. “You IDIOT! *Stupid* fucking dog. You’ll regret-eck. Ah! *Fuck!*”

The furious man paced back and forth as blood pumped from his wound and dripped down his white coat. With a trembling wrist and biting his lip, he took the bloody appendage and shoved it into his pocket, hard – gasping for air as he did. A red stain immediately leaked out from the stitching and began to spread across the pale fabric. Arnold pointed at me, still stuck growling at him from the floor.

“YOU! *Dog!* HEEL!”

He about-faced and began marching back down the corridor toward my chamber. I rose to my paws and knees, scurrying after him as best I could. I hated every obedient second but couldn’t stop my furry body from following, intent on reaching the human’s leg and padding alongside him. I saw my muzzle stretching out further as it’s black-nose tip pointed me to my goal. He led me to the familiar

white chamber and pointed to the circular spot in its centre. I followed his gesture and sat obediently where he indicated, panting even as blood continued to drool from my tongue. The see-through bars rose up to trap me once more.

“Right, Scott, you fucking *animal*. STAY!”

I was rooted to the ground and stuck panting, paw-pads glued to the tiles and tail wiggling around in my shorts. Arnold exited the room, slamming the thick white door and leaving a trail of red behind him.

01/07/2045

“C. D. G. Dash. D. One. Seven. Sample. Four. Begin.”

I didn’t know how long had passed, but I was still sat obediently where I’d been told to stay. I tried to move, to scratch an itch, to think – but it was useless. I had been placed on pause, unable to exist without permission from a human master. I heard the stilted robotic voice reverberate around the room and knew this must mean someone was coming.

My tail began wagging in anticipation, still trapped behind the tight, white fabric. It was so long now, the worst thing about its fidgeting was how it tickled the sensitive skin where my thighs joined my butt-cheeks. At least it had found its way down a leg of my shorts, the wispy tip poking free for the first time.

The thick white door opened, and Arnold wasted no time storming in. His mauled hand was bandaged up and he held the end of a leash in his other. My black nose twitched. I sniffed. Something behind the door smelled intoxicating.

“I’m going to break you down into pieces, Scott. I’m going to *dismantle* you slowly and you won’t ever forget it.”

I heard Arnold's words, but let them drift through my brain without thought as my mind devoted all attention to the tantalising scent flooding my snout. I was panting quickly, my eyes droopy as only my nose seemed to be of any interest.

Arnold tugged the leash and *she* bounded into the room. A thick wavy-furred black and white collie bitch. In heat.

Arnold flipped open the glass machine displays and hooked the looped end of the leash to a peg on the wall. The bitch was pulling at the full length of the short leash, sniffing at the air in my direction. I probably already smelled convincingly enough like a male dog to get her attention. I stuck my thin-whiskered dog muzzle through the bars as far as I could, eagerly reciprocating her sniffing.

Entranced by her scent and idly scratching at the ground around the bars with my paws, as if to dig my way out to her, I felt a throb start beneath my scrotum. The dull sensation intensified, spreading to cover my tender ball-sack as it tightened. I wanted to look down but couldn't, as my nose pointed me toward the black and white bitch.

A pulsing ache wrapped around the base of my penis as I noted the familiar sense of blood rushing into my shaft. The throbbing advanced up to the tip of my glans before mercifully abating, leaving a warm fullness in its wake. My entire dick felt like it was enveloped in a heated blanket. A sharp but painless twang travelled up my urethra, causing my hips to buck forward unexpectedly.

"Woof!"

I barked in surprise and came to my senses for a moment. I needed to stop drinking in the scent of this bitch. I covered my snout with my paws.

I needed to ignore the building arousal in my groin. I looked down at my elastane shorts to see that a downy-white fur-covered sheath had crept up beyond the waist band, hugging my stomach and swallowing my belly button beneath it. Its outline could be seen clearly as it stretched all the way down to where the base of my penis would normally be found. I gulped and wondered if my cock was still human in there, stopping myself imagining the alternative.

I needed to ignore the pleasurable tightness massaging my groin each time my bushy tail wagged and stretched the seat of my shorts. My sack tightened further, sending a flock of butterflies fluttering through my abdomen. I shuddered as a wisp of cool air tickled the tip of my cock. I pointed my snout downward once more. My tapered red glans was swollen and protruding an inch out of its furry cave.

My paw slipped from my snout in shock.

I NEEDED to sniff out that bitch and mount her.

Arnold had been watching the battle between me and my instincts. He chose the perfect moment to tap his now wall-mounted tablet with his good hand. The plastic bars receded, swallowed up by the white-tiled floor. I bounded over them before they'd even retracted fully and sprinted on my hands and knees toward the bitch, circling her and thrusting my wet nose against her moist opening.

My eyes squeezed shut with pleasure as the smell acted like an automated pump on my dick, inflating it to painfully bloated proportions. She spun and licked my muzzle, paralyzing me in place – panting, while she snuck up under my furry belly and began lapping at my turgid dog cock. The feeling was unlike anything else, my hips spasmed with each gentle lick of her nimble tongue.

I twisted and nipped at her flank. She knew what I wanted and eagerly presented herself – tail cocked to the side. I rose up, front legs splayed out, and aimed my raging cock at her vagina – slick precum streaming from its tip.

“Aaaaand... HEEL.”

I fought Arnold's command and inched forward, my aching dick jumping and flinging strings of pre into the bitch's fur.

“Bad dog. HEEL!”

My ears angled toward the source of the voice and folded, giving me the look of a scolded dog. I backed up, still uncomfortably hard, turned and padded toward Arnold – who was patting his knees like a condescending prick. He petted my head as I crawled to his feet.

“Good boy. But you'll have to wait for the finale. You wouldn't be able to satisfy that bitch with oversized legs like those anyway... Let's play. DOWN.”

Fighting against the ardour in my hips, groin and thighs – I lowered myself down onto my belly, letting out a faint bark as my exposed red phallus touched the cold white tiles. Arnold reached into his deep pocket and produced a bright yellow tennis ball.

“A good simple game for a *stupid* simple dog like you, Scott. FETCH!” He threw the ball to the other end of the chamber.

I screeched off, claws clattering on the tiles as I chased the ball. After pawing at it clumsily for a few seconds, I scooped it up between my jaws and set off back to Arnold’s feet, dropping the ball into his palm and accepting his scratches behind my ears. It felt wonderful, almost taking my mind off the heavy iron shaft which had been bouncing around awkwardly at my crotch as I ran.

Arnold stroked down the back of my head until he reached the neck of my white vest. He clasped it in his one hand and forcefully pulled it up and over my head. I yelped a little but soon quietened down as he stroked the length of my furry back with his open palm. His touch paused at the base of my spine.

“That’s no good. I want to stroke my doggy’s tail.”

He grasped at the wispy tip of my tail, squirming but held tight to my thigh by the elastane shorts it was taped under.

“Let’s get rid of these shorts now. What do you think, Scott?”

My stomach sank. Yes, I was sat, covered in fur, panting, with my bulbous red dick fully on display. Yes, I’d just played fetch with my mouth and tried to fuck a dog seconds before that. But, for some reason – somewhere deep inside, my human sense of dignity cringed at the thought of being completely naked in front of this man. He continued.

“Aww. You look a little concerned, boy. Why? You’re just a dog!”

I summoned all my willpower and fought against the panting, sitting, obedient canine I had become. I closed my muzzle and shook my head, left to right with purpose.

“Oh? I see. You don’t want to be naked in public... I understand that.”

I relaxed a little, allowing my tongue to fall out and pant again.

“I’ll make a deal with you then. Think of this as today’s ‘sampling’ test. I haven’t heard a peep out of you in English for quite a while. I’m worried you might have forgotten how to talk... So, just repeat after me: ‘I’m a good dog’. Easy.”

I looked at Arnold’s sinister face. He was right. I’d been barking without questioning it for ages now. Could I still talk? I braced myself and retracted my tongue, ready to try.

“Remember! If you bark... the shorts come off.”

Brows scrunching up as I absorbed his threat, I looked Arnold in the eye and parted my jaws – carefully puppeteering my tongue into the correct position, and...

“Ah-rroo-ruff!”

I looked as Arnold’s smug grin widened. Crossing my eyes and looking down toward my mouth, I was *sure* that was right. Wasn’t it? I tried again.

“Ahhrrroo-RUFF! Awrf!”

Panting as Arnold began to laugh, I barked at him angrily. I had gotten it right! I was certain of it!

“Not even close, Scott. You’re just a dog. Now STAY.” He ripped my tight white shorts from my behind, revealing my taut fuzzy balls and letting my tail free. “Not so bad, is it? Let’s do a proper inspection. Roll Over!”

Angry, humiliated and self-conscious in equal measure, I growled as I rolled onto my side, then my back – my paws dangling in the air and legs splayed out to the sides. Arnold rubbed my belly for a moment, then ran a finger down my sheath, applying a light pressure which I felt on my knot. He cupped my soft-furred ball sack and squeezed gently. My throat was dry, and I felt a cold sweat as I was appraised like an animal at the vets.

“You might even be able to make some pups, doggy. Imagine that.” Arnold taunted, scratching my inner thigh. He reached for and threw the tennis ball I’d delivered to his feet. “Now FETCH!”

I flew to my paws and knees in a whirlwind of fur and scurried after the ball, allowing my bushy tail to curl up and expose my furry haunches to the open air for the first time. I was ecstatic as I threshed it about in the air without any restrictions.

Scraping my long, flat tongue over the ball – I grabbed it between my teeth and heard the thick white door slam behind me. I spun round to see Arnold had gone. But the glass interfaces were still switched on! I was going to bring the ball to him! Why would he leave! Then I noticed where he’d thrown the tennis ball.

My nose quivered as I sniffed the air. The ball fell from my maw, bounced and rolled away from me as I stuffed my nose back up under my bitch’s tail. She resumed exactly where we’d left off,

presenting, and I hadn't softened even a bit – my mind returned to the ache in my rigid shaft. There was no time to waste. I mounted the bitch, my eyes glazing over with lust, and hooked my front paws around her haunches – driving my red point deep into her.

I noticed with each thrust, as I smelled the thick musk of our union blanketing the air, that my legs felt more and more springy on the tiles, my new back paws now propping me up. I could thrust deeper and faster and my cock was ballooning and tensing up inside her! My legs were shifting and thinning and my hips slotting into place for a life on all-fours. I rammed deeper, pressure and desire building at the base of my rampant dog cock.

I wound up and with an almighty thrust which rocked the bitch forward causing her to let loose a high-pitched bark, my knot popped free from my sheath – immediately plunging past her lips and deep into her. Now fully inserted, my range of motion was limited as my knot continued to engorge.

I settled for hammering her opening with quick convulsive thrusts, while the pressure reached a tipping point in my balls and dick-base.

My muzzle stretched upward, my throat expanding as I barked and howled. Streams of hot dog juice rumbled up my solid shaft and jetted from its tip, painting my bitch's insides a creamy white. I pounded six or seven more exhaustive thrusts out, each one in time with a mind-shattering ejaculation. Then fell still, collapsing on her back.

Minutes passed, and I didn't move or think. I couldn't do either anymore.

My ears twitched toward the thick white door as it opened. Arnold stood there in the doorway, holding his tablet. He tapped it and raised it toward his face a little as it played an obliging chime.

"Karen? Hi. He's done. Come to D-Seventeen and collect this stupid dog... Yes... Yes.... No, he's changed completely... No... I don't care. You can continue the tests if you see merit in it.... Okay. Bye."

He lowered his tablet and approached me. I couldn't make out what he was saying at all. I thought I heard him mention Karen, and something about a dog. Was he speaking in some strange code to confuse me? He leaned in, coming level with my damp nose and fastened a collar around my neck, struggling to work the clip with his bandaged hand. I was still tied by my knot to the collie bitch.

"I gave you a choice, Scott. But you acted like the idiotic animal you've become. You could've helped save others from the same fate your parents had to endure. And you still might – but you won't have my sympathy, even if you keep that fur forever. Narrow-minded fool."

I stared at Arnold. I could make out my name in amongst a load of garbled nonsense. What was his game? I barked, questioning him.

“Wroof?!”

“Goodbye, dog.”

My tail wagged behind me as I knew exactly what he meant. It wasn't code at all. He said 'good' and 'dog'! I panted as my ex-colleague left the room.

Epilogue

The ‘sampling’ sessions continued, in less frequent intervals as time went on. Arnold’s scientists conducted a ceaseless battery of tests and measurements. They would play the sounds of dog’s barking loudly through huge orb-like speakers and I would sigh internally as I bounded around searching for the other dogs, barking in reply.

I was forced to succumb to the insurmountable power of my sensitive nose combined with the steady flow of male-dog hormones being produced in my canine scrotum, every single time they let the collie bitch loose in my chamber.

At one point, they even tested an experimental dose of CDG Human formula on me. For a while I was hopeful, but it ultimately had no effect – perhaps because the psychoactive element was designed to catalyse in response to human brain activity to begin with. By this point, I was clearly just a very smart dog, clinging to a few remnant neural pathways for my higher thinking. Nothing more.

I tried every day to will my humanity back into existence. I tried to think and act like a human, to awkwardly pronounce words with my muzzle, to stop my tail from wagging and smile instead. It probably just looked like a funny dog practising tricks. Each time I sniffed the floor, scratched my ear with my leg, buried my knot in that bitch and licked myself clean – I was confronted with it more and more. It was similar to chess; there are many moves you can make, as long as they’re within the rules of the game. The rules of this game were simple. I was a dog. In fact, I was always just an animal, at the mercy of my biology.

Karen looked after me well in-between sampling sessions, fussing over me – petting and scratching my ears. She fed me treats, taught me some acrobatic tricks and even let me try to read books. She was the only one who spoke to me in phrases greater than ‘good dog’ and ‘come here boy’. I felt like she was trying, where she could, to keep the human side of me alive. Of course, even she couldn’t help but ask me who’s a good boy when I rolled over showing my soft belly and thumped the ground with my back paw. I didn’t begrudge her that.

Once every couple of days, Karen and I would sneak out of my chamber and down the corridor into a dimly lit testing lab. She was always extremely careful to tap her tablet and up the translucency of the glass walls. She hooked me up to the Visual Memory Recording-screen and would spend hours just poring through my memories as they flitted in and out of my mind. There were so many memories in my brain and I thought I knew what her plan might be, so I sometimes tried to help her by concentrating on particular events – things she could use to expose Good OG...

But, it was never very long before the dog in me grew restless and I began to paw at the headset, the screen filling with images of fetching sticks, chasing my tail and... embarrassingly, mounting other dogs.

At these times, Karen would sigh, breathing out slowly as she cupped my soft muzzle in her palms, stroking her thumbs along the sides of my furry face. She would stare deeply, calming me as her piercing blue eyes met mine.

Every time she did this, I would recall – only for a sliver of a second – something buried deep in me. Something I should *never* have forgotten, but which was too painful to remember.

I barked and whined and struggled free from Karen's embrace. Those icy blue eyes were the same shade as my mother's.

~ END ~