

Preface

“It’s insane Richard, it’s beyond ethical!” All the scientists looked the same to Richard Gormley—the white coats and inch-thick glasses—and the one squawking at him was no exception.

“That’s Mr. Gormley, you low-rate egghead, and I don’t pay you to be sane or for that matter ethical. This corporation is getting more and more closed fist as we speak and I’m getting sick of those tightwad stiff in Central telling me funds, my money, have been allocated to other more worthwhile investments!”

“But—“

“But nothing! Too much money has been spent on this flop of a miracle drug and I’m not spending another dime on that junk. Those high-tech disposal complexes cost more than they’re worth. Dump the junk anywhere, just don’t tell me where, and if word gets out about this, it’s not just my job on the line, but all of yours.”

Samuel was used to “The Boss” being a little perturbed at times, but as he watched the tall man in the Italian suit storm out of the door, he trembled. The boss had never been that mad before. As head technician, he knew that it was up to him to make the decision of where to dump X230. He sat down at his computer and brought up the lists of known disposal complexes and their prices. Too much. He knew that there was no way the boss would agree to those costs, but there must be something he could do. Then he saw one. The complex was labeled condemned, but Samuel knew the basic units must still be functioning. They had to be, and that way, X230 could be safely disposed of and at no cost to Richard or his superiors in Central. It was perfect.

A few keystrokes later, events were set in progress to transport the barrels of X230 to the condemned disposal complex. Samuel handled everything himself to make sure nothing discriminating would surface about the transaction. All went smooth and soon Samuel stood in the loading docks, watching the now significantly richer truck driver pull away. He went back to his desk and deleted all evidence of the transaction from the mainframe. As the last bit of information floated into oblivion, he breathed a sigh of relief, gladly returning to the endless tedium that he far preferred.

Sunlight greeted Chris through mangled blinds as he slowly surfaced to consciousness from his supermodel-specked island hideaway dream. He peeled the Wolverine comic from his chest that sometime during the night became adhered to his snoring body, and rolled, heavy footed, off the side of his dorm bed. He hated the top bunk and as he entered the bathroom, an old sock stuck to the bottom of his foot. He quickly slung the hitchhiker onto his roommate’s slumbering body that was half dangling from the coveted bottom bunk. It was his roommate’s sock anyway.

The man looking back from the mirror didn’t do much to brighten his morning-wracked disposition. His scraggly brown hair hung limp to his greasy forehead and his posture had never been what it should be. He was no taller the 5’ 10” and though he tried to imagine himself slim and muscular, his overweight frame imposed reality. I’ve gotta start working out Chris thought as he grabbed the electric razor and began to attack his night’s worth of stubble. He hated shaving, but being one of the masses of an elite private college, decorum and demerits dictated a clean shave. After a shower of not quite hot enough water, Chris strangely felt somewhat refreshed.

As he stumbled over a haphazard pile of textbooks on his way to the closet, the phone rang and he thought about letting the obnoxious sound eventually wake up his roommate. Conscience overcame spite and he went to the desk and picked up the receiver.

“Dude, what’s taking you so long?”

“Huh?” Chris picked a piece of cold pizza off of the desk and readjusted the phone as he

chomped. He never got used to Billy always being the morning person and many mornings the receiver quickly dangled at first sound of his voice, but Billy was a good friend and since Chris was more or less awake, he'd humor him. "What do you mean," Chris said as he wiped a piece of greasy cheese from his chin.

"The comic book store! First of the month! New issues!"

Chris took another huge bite, "Oh, I almost forgot. Let me get ready."

"What about Aaron?"

"Tell him yourself." Chris flung the phone at his sleeping roommate on his way to the closet and was greeted with the sound of a dull thunk and a grumbled "Hello?"

The disposal complex was situated at the top of a hill, surrounded by a forest of large oaks and pines. The gate was chained shut, but a pair of bolt cutters made little work of that problem. The driver had some misgivings about what he was doing, but the wad of cash that now bulged in his pocket quickly drove them away. Money was money and the sooner he was done dumping that junk, the sooner he could take his wife out to a good restaurant. He backed up to one of the ancient disposal units and left the truck running just in case. He searched for the unit's power box and cursed when he saw its condition. He glanced around the complex but decided that this unit was the best one he could find. The lid to the power box creaked open before it fell off its rusty hinges. Sparks flew when he threw the switch, but the unit roared to life and he hoped the sound wouldn't alert a nosey passerby or cop. The truck's tank hose barely grinded onto the rusty nozzle of the unit, but finally there was a seal and the liquid soon made its way to its new home. When the last drop emptied, he quickly turned the unit off and disconnected the hose. Cautiously, he drove away before anybody could see him. As he pulled onto the freeway, he let out a breath he did not know he was holding. He was finally done.

He never saw the crack at the bottom of the unit he was operating. What started as a small drop of bright green liquid, soon grew to a steady stream as X230 snaked its way down the hill and through the trees, finding its way to a small creek, amalgamating itself with the flowing water.