

## **Dependence**

**By Mateo Strid**

My hands ached as I finished typing and got up from my desk at the Invisa Tech headquarters. Then, a call rang out over the loudspeaker.

It said, “Five new complaints have just come in about the chip. Please make your way to the conference room.”

Annoyed, I made my way towards the conference room as I thought to myself, “Why do more complaints come in every day? Do people really expect the chip to work perfectly?” Of course, people did expect the chip to work perfectly, and after all, this was the job I chose. “Well, that’s not completely true,” I thought.

I had been given this job as chief software engineer after my grandfather had invented the chip almost six decades ago in 3005. Even though the chip had only become available to the public thirty years ago, everyone had it. That is, everyone except me.

The chip was implanted into the brain, allowing humans to do things that many thought would be impossible and compute complex calculations within seconds, essentially replacing the brain with a faster and smarter version. However, this was the exact reason that I did not have the chip. Before my grandfather died, he had warned me about the chip. He said that people would become dependent on the chip and ultimately become no more than robots. But as I saw the world move farther and farther ahead of me, I decided that after sixty years, I would finally use the chip.

I reached the conference room and took my seat, only half aware of my surroundings, thinking, “Only ten more minutes until I can go home.” After a few seconds, someone entered. It was Jean Smith, a short and rather large man with long hair and a beard that covered most of his face. He was a good friend of mine, and he was a secretary at Invisa Tech.

He greeted me, saying, “Hello Hugo, we only have a few problems today, and probably none are major.”

“Okay,” I replied, “let’s get started.”

We worked for a few minutes and reached the last problem. We ran a diagnostic test, and within seconds, a small box appeared on my screen. It read, “Urgent, Diagnostics complete, system failure.”

“Don’t worry about it,” said Jean, “it’s probably just a false alarm. We’ll work on it tomorrow.”

“All right,” I said. “See you tomorrow.”

I awoke to the sound of my alarm. I got out of bed and checked my schedule. It read, “Chip implantation—starts in five minutes.” I quickly got into my car and started driving. I called Jean, telling him that I would not come into work. I arrived at the doctor’s office and went inside.

“Hello, Hugo,” said a robot who was sitting at one of the many desks. “Doctor Olsen is waiting for you in his office.”

Dr. Frank Olsen was a tall, thin, middle-aged man with short black hair. I had known him for a few years, and he was one of the best doctors in the area. “Hello Hugo,” he said. “I hear you finally decided to get the chip.”

“That’s right, Frank. Now let’s get it done so I can get going to work,” I replied.

Frank left the room and quickly returned with a small tube.

“Give me your arm,” he said, “You will feel a small pr-”. He froze. “Dr.Olsen, can you hear me?” I asked.

Then it hit me, he had forgotten how to speak. It was exactly what my grandfather had described. He had said that one day the chip would malfunction and that when this happened, people would become zombie-like.

I rushed to the window and looked outside. Cars were stopped, traffic lights flashed on and off, and there were dozens of car crashes. My phone buzzed. I turned it on and saw one new message from Jean. It read, “I never got the chip. Call me.” I called Jean, and we decided to meet at the Invisa Tech headquarters.

I left the doctor’s office, got in my car, and drove to the Invisa Tech headquarters. When I arrived, Jean was waiting in my office with another man.

“Hello,” said Jean. “This is Bob Nevershead, an old friend of mine who is a technician and never received the chip.”

We greeted each other and sat down. Bob was an odd man. He was tall, pale, and had a particular look of worry and fear about his face. “Is there anything that we can do to fix the chip?” I asked.

“We have tried almost everything, but there is one more thing we can try. The only problem is that if it doesn’t work, the damage to the Chip’s software would ruin the chip, and it would take decades to fix.”

We headed to the server room as Jean explained everything that had happened. I had just realized that there was no one working at the office, “Where is everyone?” I asked.

“I told them all to go home,” replied Jean, “because they couldn’t even think to help us without the chip.” We reached the server room, and Bob taped a pin into a small pad.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” Bob asked me.

“If it is our only option,” I replied.

Then, Bob went over to a spare computer at one of the desks and started typing in the code. “It’s done,” he said looking over with a worried look upon his face. “I tried to fix the coding, but it’s ruined. It’ll take years to create another chip, and until then, everyone will have to retrain their mind and learn everything all over again, including how to speak.”