

An old man with pursed lips and an old jack russell terrier stared Landon down as they passed, and Landon stared back at them until they were gone, leaning on the doorbell the entire time. Finally, the intercom crackled.

"Yeah?" an indistinct voice asked.

"It's me," Landon replied, his voice equally indistinct on the other end.

The door buzzed and Landon pushed his way into the apartment building. There was no air in the stairwell, and it stank of hot mildew and carpet cleaner. Those smells gave way to kimchi and shoe polish as Landon reached the first floor, and were to giving way to the smells of marijuana, cigarettes, and patchouli when Landon started to hear gunshots.

Landon put his hand on the door to the apartment with the "Fuck Off" welcome mat. The doorknob was reverberating with automatic weapons fire from the Playstation on a 200 watt sound system. He let himself in and went to the living room, where the bushy-bearded giant, Gustav, sat cross-legged and dull-eyed on the bare wooden floor, between an overflowing ashtray and a two foot bong. Gustav muttered something at the game as Landon stalked by, looking distastefully at the collection of takeout containers, old 40s, and Dunkin Donuts coffees that festered around the room.

Landon pushed open the door to the room where Gustav let Enoch crash, a half-rotted screened-in porch full of old file boxes and a broken refrigerator, left over from the previous tenants. Enoch slept on a sunken couch beneath his leather jacket. A mop of greasy black hair stuck out on one side of the jacket, and faded jeans that the boy did not come close to filling stuck out on the other. Enoch had at least removed his combat boots before bed, and Landon stooped to take the cigarettes from Enoch's boot. He lit one, and shook the boy's shoulder.

Enoch woke up and punched the refrigerator, yelling "Fuck!"

Landon stuck the cigarette in the boy's mouth and said, "I see you decided not to go to school today."

Enoch did not deign to answer. Instead, he puffed several times on the cigarette and whispered, "That fucking bitch." He looked as if he had been crying.

"Which fucking bitch?" Landon asked, picking up Enoch's stack of reading material and sorting through it.

"Leah." Enoch said, sitting up on the couch and fishing around in his boot for his phone.

Enoch's reading, aside from his standard fare of porn, weapons, and computers, contained a 1,200 page xeroxed pamphlet on the operating systems of ATM machines. Landon pulled a

nutritionally perfect granola bar, wrapped in waxed paper, from his pocket and handed it to Enoch.

"What's wrong with Leah?" Landon asked. Leah was the girl Enoch was stalking. Landon had little doubt that she wanted nothing to do with Enoch, but she had made the mistake of being nice to him once.

"She's having phone sex with Stack Williams," Enoch said, around a mouthful of granola bar.

"You listened to their voicemails?" Landon asked, and Enoch nodded. Landon smiled wistfully and said, "Now you know that Leah is a whore. You can do better."

Enoch leaned his head against Landon, and Landon stroked the boy's hair a couple times before pushing him away.

"Here," Landon offered Enoch a pair of pills-- one to help him relax, and one to give him an edge. Enoch dry-swallowed them without question. He sulked a while longer, but soon there was sugar in his blood and there were chemicals in his brain, and he was ready to face the day.

"Let's see who's phoning home," Enoch said, pulling his laptop from underneath the couch. Landon sat beside him and looked over his shoulder, as Enoch sped through command lines. The background on his monitor changed to a photo of an elderly woman and two gap-toothed children in windbreakers on a grey

beach, and Enoch chuckled. An unorganized collection of files and folders were strewn across the photo. "Today's host," Enoch said, and then, pointing to a cluster of .jpegs on the desktop, he snorted, "she's got pictures of her cats."

Enoch typed a few more commands, and then squinted at a list of addresses that scrolled quickly by.

"We got Illinois Department of Transportation...", Enoch said, then added a moment later, "AT&T," and then, gleefully, "Chicago Public Schools..." Landon nodded after Enoch read each name. Another moment passed, and Enoch added, "United Airlines, American Airlines, Southwest... Fifth-Third Bank, Busey Bank, University National Bank..." Enoch coughed and lit an unfiltered Lucky Strike off his last one. "Not bad for a day. 73,674 users."

"No Defense Department?" Landon asked.

"Too soon. Can't target dot mil until we've got fucking millions." Enoch fingers stopped working the keyboard only to scratch his neck hastily and ash his cigarette. The drugs were working to their full effect. Leah the fucking bitch had been forgotten. "Three airlines, three banks, CPS and IDOT, in a day... We're talking about some serious fucking mayhem here."

"Mayhem is not our ultimate goal," Landon reminded the boy, "what do the message boards say?"

Enoch flipped open a notepad next to the computer and consulted a hand-written list. Soon he had joined the discussion on a Huston Cirulius fan site. Landon had not heard of Cirulius, but it seemed that he was the newest pop boy toy.

"Fucking faggot," Enoch laughed, fingers flying. On the host's computer, windows opened and closed. He had downloaded a picture of Cirulius, inserted something malicious into the file, and posted it to the site before Landon could even tell what he was doing.

"OMG. Love his hair," Enoch typed, sniggering.

"Focus, Enoch," Landon said, and Enoch began scrolling back through the previous discussions.

"Laugh Man, Ballyhoo, and Prefect all checked in, " Enoch said, "seven injections between them."

From the beginning, Landon had insisted they create their own vocabulary for public communications. An injection was a direct installation of Landon's software onto a computer-- ideally, either a high-value target that could not be left to the vagaries of virulence, or one on a closed system.

"There's Pyre," Enoch said, cracking his knuckles, "he's the one who got CPS."

Enoch had no love for the Chicago Public Schools.

"I could really go for a bong rip," Enoch said, scratching

his neck and looking over his shoulder and Landon with a narrow-eyed glare that dared Landon to refuse. Marijuana was inimical to the orderly mind, but the boy's mind was hardly orderly, and there were pills that could counteract the lack of focus. Landon smiled at the boy, and went back to the living room where Gustav belched a long welcome.

Gustav was closer to Landon's age than to Enoch's, but had made nothing of his life and had only drugs, video games, and high school students as diversions. He was slovenly, out-of-shape, and wearing the same t-shirt and cargo shorts he had been wearing for a week. Landon could smell him, even over the varieties of smoke that were deeply entrenched in the room. Gustav paid Landon no attention.

"Enoch would like a bong rip," Landon said, stalking around behind Gustav, dodging empty carryout containers and empty 40s and picking up the bong. It was sticky. Gustav did not protest. Landon went back to the porch, and caught Enoch taking a long swig from his flask.

"No more, Enoch," Landon chided, "We have too much ahead of us to begin clouding our impulses so early in the day."

Enoch put the flask back in the pocket of his jacket, lying on the bed, and then took the bong from Landon and lit it with a Zippo.

"Well?" Landon asked.

After several seconds of bubbling water, Enoch looked up at him, held his breath for several seconds longer, and exhaled a bit of smoke.

"Everybody checked in," Enoch said, and then added slowly and, Landon thought, with some amount of satisfaction, "except for Denali."

Landon was able to control his face, except perhaps for a twitch of the eye.

"Anything else?" Landon asked, as if Denali meant nothing.

After a moment of confused silence, Enoch shrugged and looked back at the computer, looking sufficiently chagrined. With a sudden curl of his lip, he typed a few words and hit the ENTER key emphatically. The desktop went grey, leaving only his command line.

"What did you do, Enoch?" Landon asked.

"Wiped her harddrive," Enoch responded nonchalantly.

"That was uncouth," Landon scolded.

"Whatever. Bitch still used AOL."