

Centricity by Nathaniel Henderson

Excerpt

JUSTICE OFFICER NEIL Linz watched Adasha from across the table with bulbous eyes set in a surgically smooth face. The conference room lights reflected slashes of crystal white along the hard edges of his cheekbones, jaw, and the solid metallic wave one might call hair.

“Then to summarize: to your knowledge, Gabriel never shared classified information with any unauthorized persons, never lied to or withheld pertinent information from superiors, nor did he ever act in a way counter to the goals of the CPCA?”

Three dozen questions in and he hadn’t blinked once. No eyelids. Fully synthetic ocular implants didn’t require cover as they could be deactivated, but most people had some for aesthetic reasons. Linz obviously enjoyed the discomfort his perpetual stare caused; it was more unsettling than the facial canvases of self-mutilators.

“As I said, no, he did not.” Adasha clasped her hands together on the polished table, posture a vertical line, and stared straight back.

“Mmm.” Linz glanced at the folder in front of him, pushed aside a sheet of vaper to get at one beneath. His use of the physical medium felt like a strategic choice, as if to emphasize how solid his thoughts were. “When did you first meet Gabriel?”

Adasha wondered if Linz’s disregard of honorifics was meant to rile her. “Fourteen years ago.”

“You were a legislative director for Assembly Representative Jenov Quamay at the time.”

“I was an assistant.” It seemed Linz had made the mistake on purpose. To test the accuracy of her responses, she assumed. “The title of director came a year later.”

“Legislative director to CPCA senior analyst to interagency coordinator.... People usually climb in the other direction, no?”