

# DARK RIDE DECEPTION by Mark S. Bacon

## EXCERPT

### CHAPTER 34

Lyle felt like he was back in an interrogation room at the Phoenix PD only he was on the wrong side of the table. He sat in front of Galvan's desk and eyed the beefy guy with a crew cut who was not introduced. You sat next to Lyle

"So as you now know, I work at—or maybe I *used* to work—at Nostalgia City. In any event, I'm a cab driver."

Galvan chuckled.

"I can show you my ID and commercial license."

"This is not the time for your name, rank, and serial number," Yoo said. "Tell us what you were doing here."

Yoo still prodded, Galvan had large dark eyes, and the crew cut looked at him like he was a suspect in a one-man lineup. "Okay, I'm just looking for a Nostalgia City employee. What's the harm?"

"And you thought he might be working *here*?" Galvan said.

"Possibly."

"And what does he do at Nostalgia City?"

"I'm not sure."

"I believe Tom Wyrick is a programmer for you," Galvan said, her voice light and conversational as if she were asking if he enjoyed his flight to Florida.

*Hell, how do they know he was a programmer? Amber, the receptionist. My mistake. She was the only one I told who Wyrick was. But how did they know I talked to her? I never mentioned her name to anyone. Surveillance cameras. They went back and looked at video of the time before I showed up in HR. Damn these guys are good. Least I know what they know about me, which is pretty much everything.*

"Wyrick is a programmer and he disappeared. The park is worried about him so they asked me to look around."

"And you were chosen, not because you drive a cab, but because of your previous occupation."

“Yeah,” he said. “I was a sergeant. Phoenix police, homicide.” Did the crew cut’s gargoyle expression soften slightly?

“Actually, Mr. Deming,” Galvan said, “the only thing we don’t know for sure is what Wyrick was working on when he disappeared. But I can guess. There’ve been stories. And you were asking around in our attractions development building next door.”

*This lady has a complete picture of my actions and motives. As complete as I would have liked for any perp I detained as a cop.* He gave a shrug of surrender and leaned back in his chair.

Galvan turned to the thickset guy next to her. “Thanks for coming over Bill. It’s like we thought. I just have a few more questions for our cab driver. I’ll give you a call later.”

Bill got up slowly, pushed his chair out of the way, and came around the desk. He looked at Yoo and made a slight motion to the door. When they left, Galvan got up and took Yoo’s seat opposite Lyle.

“Are you working for Maxwell? Hiring an ex-police detective sounds like something he’d do.”

Lyle couldn’t read Galvan’s body language. She sat back in the chair, put a hand on the arm, and crossed her legs. Relaxed maybe, but her brown-eyed stare held his attention.

“Yes and no. I am working for Max, but he didn’t hire me. I went to work at the park because it was a break from police work. It takes it out of you. I like driving my taxi.”

“You’re not driving it now.”

“I sometimes do special assignments for Max.”

“So one of your programmers has gone rogue and you want to find him before he sells your secrets.”

Lyle could play the game, too. His noncommittal expression was as good as anyone’s.

“Does it have to do with your perception deception effect?”

*Why don’t I just call Joseph Arena and have him explain the technical details to you?*

“You don’t have to worry. That term was in one of the trade mags recently. No one knows what it means.” She shifted in her chair and leaned forward. “I sympathize with you. We all want the latest and the best, and we all try to protect our own proprietary ideas.”

“Which is why Yoo followed me.”

“That’s right,” she said. “I’m sorry if he got too rough. He’s young. It didn’t sound like you were looking to steal anything. I despise anyone who would steal secrets for profit. Your secrets, our secrets, anyone’s. Our engineering team is inspired, and like Edison said, it’s ninety-nine percent perspiration. Is this Wyrick going to sell your secrets to the highest bidder or what?”

“Could be.”

“Well, I would not buy stolen technology. I can’t say for certain that Mr. Danneman wouldn’t be interested, but if anyone wanted to sell us new tech, it would have to come through me. And it hasn’t.”

Lyle was beginning to like Tracy Galvan. Intelligent, attractive. These Atlantic Adventures folks were sharp, straightforward people. Except Amber.

“I know that Maxwell and Mr. Danneman have butted heads—maybe that’s putting it mildly,” she said. “‘No love lost’ is the expression. Is that why you’re here instead of Sea World or the Magic Kingdom?”

Lyle nodded. She knew it all. “I don’t think there’s anything else I could tell you that you don’t already know, except how perception deception works. And I don’t have a clue. I really do drive a cab.”

She smiled.

“I appreciate your frankness,” Lyle said. She was telling the truth. “I could have saved a lot of time by just talking to you first.”

“So where are you going to look next?”

“Does this mean...”

“No, we’re not going to press charges. This is just our little secret. I enjoyed seeing what you did, even at our expense. Very inventive. Should keep security on their toes.”

“Glad I could provide some entertainment.”