

## REMEMBRANCE

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At first the changes were small.

Televisions became thinner.

Landlines morphed into cell phones.

Photos with a simple click.

Faster. Smarter.

Sinks turned on with a wave of the hand. Books vanished into glowing screens. Paper maps switched to fingertip navigation. Earphones shrank. Voices in our pockets answered questions before we could ask them. Watches learn to count our steps and track our sleep. Doorbells grew eyes. Lights obey voices over switches. Now the car charges overnight. Cashiers taken over by the kiosk. Vacuums clean while we sleep. Shopping carts became digital, and aisles became swipes.

As the decades passed, the digital tide rose and before we knew it, swept away our tactile world. DVDs quietly replaced—first by streaming but then came the memory implants. No more keys, no more passcodes; biometric scans are the new norm. Every advancement promised more. More access, more efficiency, more control. We didn't notice the shift. Not really. We were too busy being impressed—welcoming these new wonders into our lives without a second thought, how could we question such convenience? Somehow, life feels lighter. Mornings are no longer rushed, as the blinds rise with the sun and coffee begins brewing when our feet touch the ground. A soft voice reads aloud our daily schedule while the automatic-chef-o-nator prepares breakfast. It's instant. Effortless. We never need to consider logistics—everything unfolds seamlessly, like life is on invisible rails. This train never stops. Wardrobes are synced to the weather forecast and calendar, presenting us with the “*prime*” outfit for the day. The newest model of the *GLIDEPOD* rolls out of the garage to the front gates, sunbeams reflecting off its sleek titanium-alloy body. Traffic is a relic of the past. Routes are constantly recalibrated, strategically responding to the real time movement of the city. Every second is optimised, every minute is anticipated, and every day is perfectly planned.

We travel with our needs but also with our defences. Stitched to our shadow, weapons are used to neutralise potential risks. Chance of light rain between 11:37AM to 11:44AM is 12.3%—a water-resistant jacket folds itself neatly beside the hydrophobic climate shield and anti-slip sole overlays. It is predicted that the battery capacity of the *NEXUS-120* has decreased by 1.39% since its last review—we need a charger. The probability of a power surge in sector 3 is 0.0217728—a protector is essential. How can we argue with numbers? They don't lie; that's what we've been told. Again and again until the belief became a fact. But there's always a margin of error. We don't talk about it, but it's there, buried in fine print. So small it seems harmless. And perhaps it is harmless? Because the system is never wrong. Not from flawless predictions but control. It's all adjusted, refined, until deviation itself becomes invisible. Late delivery? The clock rewinds. Rainfall off schedule? The climate control system engages, nudging clouds and redirecting winds. Mistakes are not real; they're erased, overwritten, reclassified.

Which is why what happened to me should have been impossible.

I was on my way to the Sync Centre, one of the few reasons why people still step outside. Everything else is automated, handled remotely. But this? This had to be in person. No Exceptions. The system requires a full body scan every month. They check our vitals, neuropatterns, and emotional stability. They say it's to perform updates, to keep us "*in sync*" with the network and provide "*optimal efficiency*". I'm not fooled. It's control disguised as care, compliance monitored through the illusion of wellness. There was a clean turn, then a tremor in the circuit. The system had glitched. One single miscalculation, that's all it took. The pod veered left, ignoring my attempts to override it as if my voice wasn't registered. I rolled slowly into a sector I'd never seen before. There were no warnings, no explanations, just a feeling I had entered somewhere I wasn't meant to be. The air hung heavy like it hadn't been filtered in decades.

The buildings stood still. There were no sleek glass panels or lines of chrome, just worn brick facades—weather stained and softened at the edges. Ivy had weaved up the concrete walls, winding through chipped signage and rusted frames. A wooden bench slouched beside the curb, splinters at the end of every slat like peeling scabs. There was no scent of synthetics or tang of artificial turf. Instead, the rich aroma of damp soil and untamed grass sprouting tufts between cobblestone paths. Paralysed by uncertainty, I waited to be rerouted, for the familiar pulse of connection to return.

Suddenly, a high-pitched shriek sliced through the silence.

I turned, startled, eyes landing on a window partially veiled by overgrown ivy. Through the murky glass, silhouettes of a family of four. The fire alarm beeped relentlessly, breakfast curling black in the toaster. The mother's laughs echoed off the walls as she frantically waved the tea towel beneath the detector. The father shouted over the chaos, battling with the stubborn pancakes that refused to flip. The children circled around the table, running to the rhythm of innocent mischief. Newspapers were spread across the table. School bags slumped against the hallway wall. A glass of orange juice sat untouched, beads of condensation trailing slowly against its side.

And I felt a familiar pull in my chest. Was it the mess? Was it the noise? Or maybe just the beautiful imperfection of it all. It reminded me of when my mother used to scribble shopping lists onto crumpled napkins, her handwriting slanted across the paper in hurried loops. When she'd forgotten to add milk, and the butter, we always needed to make three trips to the grocery store. When my siblings and I would argue over what to watch on the television, flipping through channels and ultimately ending up on something none of us wanted. When the house reeked of the disaster my father attempted to create in the oven, and when we'd ordered pizza as everything went wrong. I miss it all.

The pod rebooted. A message appeared on the interface: "*DEVIATION DETECTED. RETURNING TO ROUTE IMMEDIATELY. ESTIMATED TIME 3 MINUTES.*" I didn't move. I continued to watch the family navigate their morning, living in a world where burnt toast was just burnt toast and not a malfunction.