The Path

Agent Louis stared at the screen in front of her displaying a busy intersection. Men and women rushed on their way to work.

“Man,” said the Agent sitting beside her, “Have you read this kids file.” His eyes growing bigger as he read it. “Intelligent percentile 95, President of Core Enterprises, Class B home…”

Coleson turned to face them “Class B!?” he shouted, “The President doesn’t have a Class B. Who the hell is this kid?”

“Perhaps I would know, if Rodrigez ever decide to hand me back MY file,” Louis said, finally turning to face the other agents. After all, this was her case and she didn’t enjoy the fact they were looking through her file. She snatched the file from Agent Rodrigez’s hands as she got up.

“Hey! I wasn’t finished.”

“This child’s Path is none of your concern.” She turned her expressionless face between the two agents, “And don’t you two have a homeless case to deal with.” With that she began her walk to the interrogation hall.

Her heels clicked as she walked down the tiled hallway. As she entered the elevator at the end of the hall, she opened the file, skimming it for herself. This boy’s Path was everything anyone could want. Perfect in every way. He would’ve had a life envied by all, so why did he do it. This was the question on everyone’s mind. This was the question she was going to answer.

The elevator dinged as she reached the bottom level. “Interrogation hall, level 1b.” said the automated voice of the elevator. The doors opened and Agent Louis stepped out, closing the file.

Directly in front of her was a women siting at a desk, with a screen in front of her showing her live feeds from each of the interrogation rooms.

“Good morning, Agent Louis,” said the women smiling. “Our guest is in Room 1.” The guard handed Louis a clipboard with the interrogation sheet on it, and a pen. She nodded, took the board, glancing down at the sheet and headed into the room.

The boy sat in the chair, the only peace of furniture in the room.

“Well if it isn’t my judge, jury, and executioner,” the boy said, with a cocky smile on his face.

“Is your name Alexander Shift?”

“What? No hello, doesn’t your guest of honor dissever that much.”

A small smile crept on her face, but she quickly brushed it off. Agent Louis glanced up from her clipboard making eye contact, “Answer the question,” she demanded. He did not hold her gaze for more then a second.

“Yes.” The smile fell from his face, replaced by a far more grave expression.

Her eyes returned to the form. “Were you born in New York City May 15th 2021?”

“Yes.”

“Are you 16 years old?”

“Yes.”

“Are your parents George and Joan Shift?”

“Yes.”

“Are you a current resident of 1854 Lord Street?”

“You already know all this stuff. Do we honestly have to keep going?” He said daring a glance at his interrogator. “Don’t you want to know why?”

Agent Louis lowered her board slightly and looked at the boy. He was an ordinary 16 years old boy. Why would he do something like this? Why destroy his future? She had met enough of these cases, all perpetrated by low, hopeless members of society, but never by someone like him.

Her face remained expressionless as she asked “Why?”

“Simple,” he began siting forward in his seat, “Each country tries to cope, in their own way, with the issues of the world. Our fair nation decided that the best way to deal with its problems was to become more efficient. Leave less to chance. Create the perfect ‘Path’ for every individual, entirely on their intellect and personality, so they can become a useful and productive member of society. No waste of space, everything has a job, everyone has their place.”

“You haven’t answered the question.”

“Yes, sorry I get carried away. But I would have thought that you had already come up with the answer.” The Agent was beginning to get annoyed with the boy.

“Why?” He looked right in to Agent Louis’ eyes not breaking away, “Because I chose to.”

“Your Path allows for choice.”

“My Path,” He said, as though the words were poisonous and he could not spit them out fast enough “My Path allows for nothing. It is all planed to a tee. I have no choice. It’s all an illusion. An illusion that has everyone tricked,” he snarled.

“So you strayed from your Path, fully knowing the consequences, simply because you wanted to.”

“Yes.”

“Very well.” She looked back down to her interrogation sheet all nearly filled out, except for one box at the bottom. “You have knowingly broken the law at penalty of death. But since you are underage, the PCD can offer you an alternative. Plead innocent, and you will be put in a rehabilitation program. You may never make your way to where you would have been, but it is very generous. Or plead guilty and…” She didn’t need to finish. He already knew what the alternative was.

With a sigh he said, “Guilty, I choose guilty.” He smiled closing his eyes and leaned back in his chair.

Agent Louis’s eyes flicked up, and she looked at the boy. She turned and exited the room. She stopped just after having left the integration room. She stared at the last box on the page.

Innocent, or

Guilty?

Without hesitation, she closed her pen. Louis walked back to the desk and placed the clipboard and paper in a tray by the Guard. She stood in front of the elevator waiting for it to open. Seconds later the familiar ding came just as the doors opened. She stepped in. She glanced down at the file of Alexander Shift just as the doors began to close.

Right before the doors could fully close, a hand popped between the crack, forcing them open. The Guard stood in front of Agent Louis.

“Sorry but, um…the sheet its blank…I am sure it is just a mistake, but weren’t you…”

Louis interrupted her, “Are you sure that it is blank?”

“The doors are unable to close, please remove all obstacles,” chimed the automated elevator voice

“Yes, Agent. I looked at it myself. Are you not suppose to…”

“The doors are unable to close, please remove all obstacles,” repeated the automated voice.

“Guard please, you must be mistaken.” Louis said in a calm voice. Seconds passed between them as the Guard tried to make sense of what was going on.

“The doors are unable to close, please remove all obstacles.”

“Yes, sorry mam, I must have,” the Guard said giving Agent Louis a slightly confused look.

“Good, we got that cleared up. Now if you would please remove your hand from the door, I will be back to work.” The women did so, and the elevator doors closed.

Word count: 1164