

Approx. 1,000 Words

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DEX AND THE FREAKAZOID

by Cruz Andronico Fernandez

It doesn't take long for the EMP compound to work its way through his system. I can see the change in him already. Soon, the pulse will escape his body, shorting out every electronic device in a thousand foot radius, including the electric synapsis in his brain and my rail gun. Then, the psycho-steroid compound will activate turning him into a mindless, bloodthirsty, freakazoid. I'll be trapped in here with him. I guess I'm going to be late for dinner, again.

I was supposed to meet Ellen after my duty shift. We were going to have a nice dinner. It was supposed to be my chance to apologize for not being there for her. For letting the job get in the way of the marriage. But, first I had to run down a lead. It was only going to take a few minutes.

A new batch of designer drugs had made their way from the lower levels of Los Angeles Tower 01 to the upper levels. The Captain wanted this swept up fast. He couldn't have the city's rich kids getting hooked on neuro-chems; not the ones that were only meant for the people living in the lower levels of the city. The Tops had their share of chemical recreation, but those were designed for them. They weren't harmful. Every element in the Top's chems was high class. The Bottom's stuff was cut with whatever chemical runoff dripped down to the bottom levels.

I was getting ready to head home for the day when I got a call from the desk sergeant. He had a doctor who had been picked up for possession of a small quantity of the new chem. Doctor Day was his name. This guy was dripping with guilt and sweat. I gave him a hard look, and he rolled over. He spilled everything.

He had made a few bad bets and gotten himself involuntarily "attached" to one of the Big Bosses. Now, he had to make drug runs to the mid levels, and share what he brought back up with the good citizens of the Upper Levels.

He agreed to hook me up with his contact on the mid-level; a grease ball by the name of Rex The Destroyer. Stupid ass names. I decided to just head down and poke my head into the shop. It was a noodle joint. By day they sold noodles, by night they distributed narcotics.

I had Doc Day watching through my optical implant to give me a heads up on the location and the suspects. I was only going in to identify and tag Rex and make a few chemical scans of the area. If things checked out, we would send in full investigative nanites later. I just wanted to be sure the doc wasn't wasting our time.

Unfortunately, Rex made me for a cop the minute I walked in. It would be determined later that they had illegal facial recognition implants, with a black market database of the entire Law Giver Force.

I ordered a bowl of ramen. First mistake. Not having had lunch, I ate it fast. Second mistake. The sedation compound in the noodles acted fast. Less than a minute after slurping my last noodle my face was in the bowl.

I woke up in the back room of the noodle joint. I was still groggy, but I could tell that this was the place they had set up the replication system that produced the chems. The smell of chemicals and biological byproducts was unmistakable.

"Not a place for Law Givers, no sir," said Rex from the shadows. "This no place for you, Mr. Emilio Dex. Correction, Detective Emilio Dex."

"Yeah, but at least I ain't as ugly as you," I said. Hey, I was still groggy. I'd try to think of a better come back later. In the meantime, I was trying to figure out why I had lost communication with the Doc. At the very least, the moment I lost consciousness the desk sergeant should have taken the communications feed over and sent in back up; unless they were running a jamming virus that was somehow warping my signal. Either way, it was my fault for going into the joint without a partner.

"I have something really nice for you," said Rex. "This something special. Been working on it for the Big Boss. What better way to introduce it than to a piggy Law Giver?"

"Thanks, I feel honored," I said.

"Oh, it *is* an honor. You see, my new chem will change the world. I call it Pulse. I make EMP technology into a chem. Then add a little psycho-steroids to give it extra punch. You become walking technological destruction zombie. There is no defense. All your Law Giver tech is useless. You cannot fight them. Here, I show."

Rex pounds on the door. Someone pushes in a Slow-Head from the dirt levels. This guy has been deep in the chemical waste.

He's practically a zombie already. Rex places a sticky chem patch on the Head's shoulder and leaves. I'm alone with a time bomb.

As the drugs begin to take effect, I realize I'm hearing a new voice. It's Doc Day. My Comm System is back.

"Sorry about that. It took me longer to crack Rex's virus than I thought," says Doc. "Ok, in about thirty seconds your going to be hit by a powerful electromagnetic pulse. You need to get behind that panel I see in the corner. That will shield you enough to keep your heart from stopping. Unfortunately, your weapon will no longer be operational. You're going to have to fight this guy the old fashioned way, sorry."

Great. Typical. The pulse hits heard. I can feel it through the shielding. The fight is quick and painful.

Late for dinner, my wife asks for a divorce. I'm not surprised. I eat my steak and go back to work.