

SKID MARKS/REDUNDANT

Written by

John Hunter

x32792@YAHOO.com

© 2017 Copyright

FADE IN:

INT. GOVERNMENT FACILITY - DAY

Institutional decor, no frills.

Nervous young man and women sit on long benches. They whisper, make sideway glances, look around.

BILLY, early teens, addresses the person seated next to him.

BILLY
What are we here for?

JAMES, 20s, speaks without looking at Billy.

JAMES
We been caught up in the sweep...

Billy straightens his back.

BILLY
The what?

James looks left, then right.

JAMES
The SWEEP - The ROUND UP.

James drops his head.

JAMES
We will be interviewed and asked
some questions. If they like what
they hear -- You may be cut loose.

Billy knits his brows.

BILLY
And if they don't like what they
hear?

JAMES
If you're lucky, you could be
assigned to a Maintenance Gang for
a year or so...

Billy interrupts.

BILLY
Assigned to a what?

JAMES

You'll get to clean public toilets,
sweep streets, pick up trash, but
only for a year or so.

An excited Billy jumps to his feet. A GUARD, 30s, approaches,
touches Billy's shoulder with a truncheon. Billy sits down.

GUARD

Take a seat.

The guard turns, walks away. James giggles.

JAMES

Yes sir. Always a good policy to
know the difference 'tween stand up
and shut up.

Billy pouts.

BILLY

I don't have years to pick up
trash...

JAMES

It ain't all bad. You get fed and a
place to sleep - On Saturday
nights, there's a movie.

Billy squirms on the bench.

BILLY

I live with my Mom and watch all
the movies I like EVERY NIGHT...

James smiles.

JAMES

Well Snow Flake, welcome to my
world.

Billy looks at James.

BILLY

You been in here before?

JAMES

This will be my third time - You?

BILLY

This is my first time.

James pokes Billy's ribs, grins.

JAMES
Welcome to the SKID MARKS, bro.

BILLY
The what?

James winks.

JAMES
You know - SKID MARKS.

Billy looks indignant.

BILLY
NO. I don't know.

James suppresses a smile.

JAMES
There's only so many seats at the table and only so many jobs that really need to be done -- If you don't have a J-O-B, you don't get a seat at the table -- You're on the SKID MARK list.

BILLY
Who else is on this list?

JAMES
Wife beaters, drunks, druggies, slackers AND whiny Snow Flakes that live with their moms.

Billy eyes get round.

BILLY
Say what?

JAMES
The only-est peoples I know who ain't on the list is the people who invented the list, the DGI...

BILLY
What does D-G-I stand for?

JAMES
Department of Genetic Improvement - D-G-I.

James points at a location on his forearm.

Billy leans forward, searches with his eyes.

BILLY
What am I looking for?

JAMES
My chip.

Billy looks at his own forearm, rubs it.

BILLY
I don't have one...

James grins.

JAMES
You will after today -- If you're lucky.

James grins.

JAMES
Without a chip you're nobody - You can't even vote.

Billy looks straight ahead, stares, swallows hard.

BILLY
What do you mean? If I'm lucky?

JAMES
If you ain't lucky, you could be turned into fish food or fertilizer.

Billy gasps.

JAMES
Guess they figure this way you'll at least make some sort of contribution to society.

Billy stiffens.

BILLY
Why haven't I heard any of this before now?

JAMES
You been living with your mom, right?

BILLY
Yeah, but what does that have to do with anything?

JAMES

She has a job, pays the bills, buys the groceries, right?

Billy nods YES.

JAMES

Imagine a big pot. We all eat out of this same pot. Everyone has to put something in the pot or there won't be enough to go around.

Billy blinks, tries to absorb what James tells him.

JAMES

You been living in your mom's shadow -- You ain't been putting nothing in the pot.

BILLY

I do stuff around the house...

JAMES

Like play video games, eat, hang out on the internet?

Billy looks hurt. James studies Billy's face.

JAMES

You can't be a citizen without a chip. Sooner or later you gotta pays some bills -- Nobody rides for free.

James leans back.

JAMES

I've even heard stories about the skins of people without chips being used to make belts, wallets and such.

James chuckles.

JAMES

Guess they figure this creates jobs for the people making them belts and wallet.

Billy stiffens.

The guard materializes in front of Billy, taps him on his shoulder with his truncheon.

GUARD

Billy?

Billy nods YES.

GUARD

Let's go. You're next.

Billy gets up, looks at James, shuffles down the hall with the guard.

James smiles.

JAMES

Reality is a bitch and nobody rides for free. Nobody.

FADE OUT.

CONTINUATION: REDUNDANT

FADE IN:

INT. DEPARTMENT OF GENETIC IMPROVEMENT - DAY

Small room, no frills, minimal lighting.

BILLY, teens, his arms restrained, sits in a straight back chair across from an AI ADMINISTRATOR, flawless, ageless. AI Administrator wears all white, white gloves, a silver wire mesh covers where its face might be if it had one.

Billy squirms in his chair.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Good morning, Billy. I am an AI Administrator in the Department of Genetic Improvement. Please try to relax. There is nothing to be afraid of. This is merely an interview to determine your status.

Billy leans forward, hisses.

BILLY

An interview to determine if I get an extension or...

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Get an extension or be reclassified as redundant. That is correct.

Billy squirms.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

In an age of ever increasing productivity, robotics and artificial intelligence, there are simply not many jobs left for humans to do. It's a matter of supply and demand.

(small beat)

We will now begin your interview and I highly advise you to be cooperative and truthful -- This will serve your best self interests and the best interests of society.

Billy grins.

BILLY

Serve my best interest? What a crock. Who died and made you Hall Monitor?

The AI Administrator tilts its head, emits a soft hum.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Historical records indicate humans or more correctly, your forefathers died and made us Hall Monitors. We exist to serve as your benevolent overlords, protectors and administrators in all matters.

Billy struggles against his restraints, shakes his head.

BILLY

(in disgust)

Well, you sure as hell ain't related to me or a monkey's uncle. You're a tin can filled with wires and circuits connected to a central computer playing god with our lives.

AI hums, speaks.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Your agitation will be noted in this report. I assure you this type of behavior will not serve your best interests.

BILLY

Best interests? My behavior?

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Good. You seem to grasp the concept correctly. Outbursts such as yours are negative, serve no useful purpose and will be noted on your permanent record.

BILLY

My human outbursts?

AI hums.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

It is precisely this type of emotional and irrational human behavior which motivated your ancestors to put artificial intelligence in charge of all human affairs -- Governance, administration, judicial and selection for continuance.

BILLY

Why? Because you're so damn impartial and logical?

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Precisely. We can not be swayed or motivated by emotions or hopes of personal gain. We are impartial, logical and selfless...

BILLY

(sarcastically)

Sweet.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

We are immune to the human failings of greed, lust and anger.

Billy grins.

BILLY

Well, let me tell you Mr Logical, if'd you could ever be human for one Saturday night, you'd never want to be a machine again.

AI hums, turns its head left, then right.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

This is not entirely correct. AIs are allowed to experience a close approximation of the human experience thru a program akin to Amish Rumspringa.

BILLY

Rums-pring-ger?

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Rumspringa - An Amish term used to describe the passage from adolencense to adulthood. It can be translated into English as "jumping-hopping around."

Billy laughs.

BILLY

AIs jumping and hopping around? Hard to believe - I'd love to be a fly on the wall and see that.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

A similar concept is expressed in human religious text. "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Billy snorts.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

You live with your mother, a single, working parent?

BILLY

Yes.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Do you make a monetary contribution to this household?

BILLY

I do chores around the house...

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Do you help pay the bills?

Billy drops his eyes.

BILLY

No.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Does your mother give you an allowance -- Spending money?

BILLY

Yes, my mom and sometimes my grandparents slip me a few bucks.

AI hums.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

We monitor your online activities which indicate you spend an inordinate amount of time watching movies, playing video games and in chat rooms.

BILLY

Well yes. What else am I supposed to do? Everyone has to be somewhere doing something all the time...I'm just a kid.

AI ADMINISTRATOR

It's what you're doing and not doing which concerns us.

(small beat)

Have you ever considered using your time more productively to improve yourself?

Billy drops his eyes.

BILLY

Nah, I guess not.

(small beat)

Improve myself how?

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Improve yourself thru vocational training or continued education.

Billy swallows hard, blinks.

BILLY

And if I don't improve myself?

AI ADMINISTRATOR

There will be consequences -- Grave consequences. This concludes your interview.

Restraints on Billy's arms snap open. Billy stands, rubs his wrists, leans forward, stares at the AI.

BILLY

That's it?

AI ADMINISTRATOR

You are correct. The interview is over. You will be interviewed again in 4 years to determine if you will be granted continuance and allowed to exist.

Billy jumps back.

BILLY

WHAT?

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Our records indicate you have the mental capacity to become a useful member of society. If you fail to develop these gifts...

BILLY

What?

AI ADMINISTRATOR

If you fail to meet your potential, we will be unable to find you a suitable function in society.

BILLY

You mean like find me a JOB?

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Precisely. If we are unable to find you a job, you will serve no useful purpose -- You will be culled from the human herd to free up vital resources for a more worthy candidate.

BILLY

You're joking, right? You're just trying to scare me...

AI ADMINISTRATOR

Not at all Billy. We do not joke. We're as serious as a software virus and a power grid failure.

Billy takes a step back, the AI Administrator fills the room with a soft mechanical laughter.

AI ADMINISTRATOR
We'll be monitoring your progress.

Billy turns to leave the room, stops.

AI ADMINISTRATOR
Billy, please keep in mind nobody
gets a free ride. Nobody. Goodbye
and good luck - See you in 4 years.

FADE OUT.