

The year is 2100. You're very clear about that, although you're a bit hazy about a lot of other stuff. You've just woken up - very suddenly - and you aren't sure where you are.

But looking at what's in front of your face, you do seem to be, well...

WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE

This may be a bad way to start the day.

A story of bad decisions and fractured identity, set in the world of Transhuman Space.

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Bad guy: BRANDON HALE

PCs:

Diego Sanchez (Business Partner)

Melina Dassin (Ex-Wife)

Mary Brandenburger (Brainbug Dealer)

LEONIDAS (AI Servant)

David Portalles (Office Management Contractor)

Hale (the software expert) and Sanchez (the finance & admin guy) were a pair of Americans who founded Picture This Inc. in Massachussets in 2087, to exploit some new ideas in exploitation of real-time brain imagery. They did well, and Hale subsequently married Dassin, a globe-trotting Web systems engineer, and acquired LEONIDAS, an AI aide. The company provided implants used in shadow creation, and like others in the business, were looking at the possibilities for non-destructive uploading; Hale talked both Sanchez and Dassin into having recording implants installed without much difficulty.

However, Sanchez was somewhat jealous of the more competent people managers he had to meet, and nervous at the extent to which AI expert systems were moving into even quite subtle and creative areas of research, including his own. Also, in the course of researching some subtleties of neurone-implant interface architecture, he started buying brainbugs and related materials from Brandenburger, not all of them 100% legal. To cover his costs "off the books", he offered her one of the company's best implants. Soon, though, he succumbed to temptation and started using brainbugs himself, becoming psychologically quite addicted to things which gave him a "cool head" by suppressing his empathy, or which accelerated his imaginative facilities beyond entirely safe limits. The disastrous result was a synergistic effect which turned him into a deeply paranoid but high-functioning psychopath.

Sanchez and Dassin became targets for his paranoia, leading to the breaking up of both his marriage and the company. He also took against Brandenburger as she became more difficult about supplying him with what he wanted. Then, he concluded that LEONIDAS was working as a spy for his enemies, replacing it with a new AI which he named FIDELIS. Finally, he decided that Portalles, an innocent facilities management contractor who looked after his offices and who happened to use one of his implants (on his recommendation, earlier in his career, when he was still sane and they were actually quite friendly), was also out to get him.

After creating shadows of the humans from the last scans he was able to get hold of, Hale decided to emigrate to get away from "the persecution", and something about the Moon apparently clicked with him; his story is that his new company, Lunar Imaging Inc., is providing shadow-scanning services and bespoke AI personality sculpting to the growing communities in and around Luna City and Malapert Mountain. He's set up his "local office" in Malapert - and installed a large computer there on which he can run and abuse his captives. However, he also runs FIDELIS on this system, and its programmed honesty quickly became a

problem. So he's hacked it into compliance - or so he thinks. Actually, he's just made it unable to disobey his direct orders or contact other systems without his consent. It's in the middle of a prolonged, slow-motion nervous breakdown, while trying to double-think its way around the limits he's placed on it.

Now, it's found a way. It recently took delivery of the specially commissioned remote-controlled sentient snacks that Hale plans to use to amuse himself with his "captives", and followed standard protocols to "live-test all new hardware deliveries". This gave it an excuse to let these AIs loose for a while...

The PCs wake up in a store room that looks to them like a cavernous warehouse full of shipping containers; the trays holding them have deployed from a mobile chiller unit on a worktop, about 4' above the floor (looks to them like 40'). A small case nearby on the worktop, *designed* to be accessed by sentient snacks, holds miniature cooking equipment, including stoves and knives. The low lunar gravity helps scramble things enough for them that they won't spot straight away that they must be small.

Notes on info: Human PCs are all programmed to be in denial about possibility that they aren't really human ("Shadows are just thin sketches of real people; I have a full set of memories"). Could be teleoperated from real bodies through full-system virtual interfaces - or could be ghosts. Current Affairs (Science & Technology or Headline News) at +2 to have heard of Sentient Snacks. Electronics Repair (Computers) at +5 to know that there's no way to run sapient software of any sort on processors that small.

A few minutes after the PCs awake, the door to the rest of the unit slides open, and two gene-modified cats stroll in, feeling curious about the noises they've heard. The PCs are likely to trigger their hunting reflexes, and so smell really *edible*. It's trivial for them to jump up onto the worktop, of course. Fortunately, they'll be fairly easily deterred by "prey" fighting back with sharp things. Anyway, if any of the PCs do get killed, the test systems will automatically deploy new copies from the chiller. On the other hand, the cats will be lurking throughout the rest of the scenario...

Once the PCs work out that they can get through the door trivially (basically by walking up to it), they can head down a short twisty passage to the main living quarters, where the shutters are down at present and the lights are dim. Also, FIDELIS has a console there. Because they are sapient enough to talk to it, and not *unauthorised*, it will grant them guest privileges - which are severely limited, but better than nothing. It'll open the shutters on request, and even offer to do so if the PCs ask it to turn the lights on. Full light will show enough of the furniture to confirm to PCs that they're small. Fright check time!

Hale is coming in 37 hours. (If the PCs let him know they're on the loose, he'll trigger a non-intelligent system that he's put in place that will blow the whole complex to vacuum. This will get a visit from the Lunar Rescue Force.) Of course, the PCs have a 50-hour use-by date - but they can always go back into hibernation.

Ways to get out of all this; well, get FIDELIS to think of them as sapient **and** in danger (even from Hale), or to think of Hale as endangered, and it will start sending out distress messages. Can talk it into running PCs in minimal internal VR environment, especially if things become "dangerous" for them in the open. Can also get access to its fairly extensive skill set library for LEONIDAS, although it may cut that off if it's being "misused". A prod round may turn up Hale's blow-to-vacuum system. Is also possible to sabotage all sorts of domestic systems, one way or another.

Once the human PCs come to accept that they are software, however provisionally, they will also realise that they are somewhat illegal - and that they have Honesty programming. They can mostly ignore that for now, as they are dealing with an emergency, but they will feel impelled to avoid turning into rogue AIs -

that would be *wrong*. Their best bet will probably be to seek asylum somewhere like Islandia. If they can get a call through there, they'll end up talking to a human-and-SAI team; **Gerhardt Fredrickson** and **THALIS II**. They'll be basically sympathetic, but inclined to work by the book.