

Chapter 12

The Crime Beat: “He’s Guilty” Says the Cat

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the future of crime journalism, specifically centered on how technologies, data, and virtual worlds might shape the investigation and help to capture criminals. With cameras everywhere, there may be a witness on any corner. Smart phones, television, and robotic pets record subversively every minute of one’s life. Facial recognition can be used to ferret through a large crowd seeking repeat offenders amidst a monitored society.

IMAGINE . . .

He had denied ever doing it. He said that he was a victim of circumstance. There was no evidence. He had an alibi and no history of ever doing such a horrific crime. At face value, it appeared that it was impossible that he could have done something like this. He had never left his micro-apartment. But there was a witness. A non-judgmental witness, unbiased in every way and a solid lead. The cat had witnessed everything. Grayson, his AI pet.

The body, motionless, laid bloodied with tattered deep black holes resembling burnt craters around the face, most likely from a cigarette. Indeed, he started smoking again, triggered by the recently released game, “Junk Food Junkie,” in which the player indulges in vices now illegal due to their addictive effects, cigarette smoking being one of them; the nasty habit had been outlawed for years. An assessment was quickly taken by the AI crime drone that analyzed the scene and environment and concluded almost instantly after a review of data from past criminal cases that the crime was personal, yet it was unclear if it were a crime of passion or hate. Unfortunately, there was a snag in the case. It appeared that the perpetrator had not been predetermined to show a disposition to criminal behavior. However, it did indicate that the perpetrator had been born in an underdeveloped country.

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In most of the world, a mandatory psychological test must be conducted on every child at the age of five to address and prevent any individual deviancy. The perpetrator had either not taken the test, or he had worn some kind of cloaking device, likely purchased illegally on the dark web. Alas, with no records of the individual found, there would be no way to predict his criminal tendencies. This murder was a surprise. The victim's roommate sat sobbing on a blood-stained cyberpod, exclaiming that the victim had enemies but no one of any threat level.

Yet there was no evidence of forced entry, no apparent struggle. Just a body in a pool of blood laying on the ground. The AI crime drone analyzed the setting concluding by smart device surveillance and records that nothing seemed to be missing, at least nothing of value, only the pet owner's AI pet cat, Grayson. However, this was not uncommon. AI pets were designed to flee in times of distress, a safe and survival protocol installed in all AI companion robots that are only activated when the owner was in danger or the robot itself. However, Grayson had yet to be found and no distress messages had been launched.

Using data gathered by the victim's smart device appliances, mobile units, and 360-degree camera surveillance, the beat drones aided law enforcement in recreating the crime. However, this would only determine how the crime was committed, not who committed it. To find the perpetrator there was one more important step. A step that required a data analysis of cognitive behavioral algorithms to assist in creating a model of the suspect, notably a person who fits all specifications gathered and fits the personality traits, criminal approach and action. This would also help determine the suspect's potential hiding locations. This was not easily determined, though, if the perpetrator had switched to the virtual world. The cyber police had already been notified of this possibility. But with little evidence, the perpetrator who was now an avatar would be difficult to find, a scenario becoming more and more likely by the evidence gathered so far.

The VR world investigation would take more time because of the possibility of body and world jumping which is an easy means to escape the law authorities. Within minutes there was a break in the case, an occurrence only feasible in the real world because of the heavy surveillance technology left from all the wars. Resting on the bottom of a toxic dump site, submerged in soot and byproduct liquid poisons, Grayson was found. Fortunately, his location beacon had not been destroyed. According to the CBA unit, a trained killer always removes the tracking beacon. However, this one was not. A common mistake by a first-time killer. The case and who committed the murder was unraveling.

Then another break. Grayson recorded the murder, and that data was still intact in his memory chip. The detectives were able to manually upload and retrieve the information. They now knew the murderer was David Denette and within seconds his micro-apartment had been raided by a drone SWAT team led by the key detectives in the case who were ready to arrest him. But to their disappointment, he had already escaped. The CBA quickly uploaded all his data from his devices only to discover that he had escaped into the VR world. The case was now turned over to the Cyber authorities.

With the gathered data provided by the CBA unit and Grayson, the Cyber team extracted the data and informed the detectives of Denette's likely location. They were led to a community of cave dwellers at the outskirts of town at an abandoned mine. The Cyber unit remotely disabled all locks, shutting down the

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