Chapter 14
A Model Citizen:
The Rise of Social Credit

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the rise of social credit in society as a tool to control its citizens. Social credit is defined through every aspect of one's life, from credit card scores, grades in school, work ethic, reputation of friends and family members, physical fitness, one's partner, and the perspective of neighbors. All this information and more goes into a data mill that generates a citizen score that can lock out an individual from a good education, job, or even stop them from leaving the country. One way to lower one's score is to become a highly successful investigative journalist reporting on corruption in the government.

IMAGINE . . .

Domingo Padron could not contain himself. Soon he would be able to fulfill a goal, a dream that he had since his childhood. Bound and brought up in a technological caste system where a person's past dictates their future and the actions necessary to survive in the modern world. Unfortunately, this process ensured an often continuous downward spiral of permanent negative marks on a person's life that was very difficult to reverse.

The Social Credit Score (SCS) would be the main indicator to gauge the characteristics of a model citizen. Domingo, like most poor people, was a victim of circumstance. He would never be able to change his SCS, a seemingly endless obstacle between a life of freedom or of just existence. Yet there was one exception, virtual reality offered a means to escape the mundane in his life. This was the only means affordable to people like him that resembled a real and limitless life that only the wealthy experienced. It wasn't an easy life in the real world, regularly referred to as the "Meat Locker" by most in his social level and circle.. He had few choices presented to him in his daily life and felt forced to do things that were not accepted within the government's social order. He wanted more than to merely survive, the

scarce resources meant that many were squeezed into limited housing so much so that he and his social circle were feeling increasingly claustrophobic.

He lived and had grown up all his life in a micro-apartment hyper-pod, 6' x 2.5' in size, because of the overpopulation issues. He had never really experienced how it felt like to walk in a world where space seemed limitless. Domino had come from poverty and an abusive family life. For months, his mother and father had left him in his hyperpod, forgetting about him only to later be discovered by credit collection bots during SCS reconnaissance. Authorities discovered him barely awake in a coma likely induced by trauma. His screams for help had gone unnoticed for an undetermined timespan. From this point forward, after months of recommended counseling, he yearned for freedom from physical and social constraints. He dreamed about solitude where he could think clearly and freely without his space being compromised by surveillance cameras or crowds of people. Unfortunately, physical and mental space were luxuries for model citizens, and those who could afford them with a high SCS.

Coming from poverty, Domingo's living quarters, like most of his social level, were assigned pods. Land was only available to those with high social credit scores, mostly held by wealthy or famous individuals. He now lived in a micro-apartment in a skyscraper. These "stacked communities" were basically pods stacked on pods in a tightly confined space. It was the best most could expect with sub-par social credit scores, which increasingly included most of the population as unemployment soared. Although his pod was small, he felt fortunate; it is amazing how humans can adapt and make use of what they have.

Some poorer residents had three people living in a pod, sleeping on top of each other, divided into bunk-bed sleeping arrangements, allowing for personal storage within the bed units. He felt fortunate that he had a micro-hyperpod to himself. His psychological disability allowed him to live solitarily. Most didn't even have that. Today, his walk home had taken longer through the building's local skybridge due to the onlookers stopping to view the shaming ads strung across the skyline, featuring the latest individuals falling below acceptable SCS scores. Their offenses were displayed on digital video for all to see. People stood still watching the fall of their brothers and citizens, quietly staring and simply happy they weren't on the list today.

Life on earth was now just endless lines. People waited standing still for hours. But today was different on his way back home. A bright possibility emerged from the chaotic congested sky muddled in shame ads. A sky sign flashed: "Migration to the Moon is for Everyone." Of course, humans colonized planets for a while, but to get there was still very expensive and only the wealthy could afford such a migration. The moon had now been affordable for those who even had a low SCS. After a week, Domingo filed all the paperwork proving that he was a model citizen a minimal threat and deviance. Sure, his score was a bit under average, but it was high enough to qualify to travel to the moon. He would soon be free.

When he showed up at the Stargate Airport, more lines. He waited and imagined himself running but never reaching the horizon as he had done in VR worlds. The airline ticket agent called him over. He handed his luggage over and then the man said. "Hold on," for he had noticed something in his paperwork.

"Your credit rating is 490. You can't travel unless it's 500 or better."

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