

Divided

By Jajohn Ouyang

I awoke to the splash of cold water on my face, and that immediately caused me to jolt upright.

“What the hell was that for?”, I asked without looking around.

“We’ve been found, we need to move now, or else they might find us. Who knows how long they might take, but it’s for sure less than 40 minutes to get to us, so get packing, Smith.” I hear a familiar voice respond. It was my brother John. I whirled around to see him carrying all of his luggage. What a nice morning. I immediately hop out of bed and start stuffing my clothes in a duffle bag without paying much attention to what I put in the bag.

I have been living on the run for my entire life. Before I was born, a genetic mutation spread rapidly across human civilization. This mutation caused humans to be divided into two factions. The oppressive “Blessed”, and the endangered “Defectives”. The “Blessed”, as they called themselves, had enhanced strength, thought, sight, etc. The “Defectives”, which is what the enhanced humans have used to refer to them as, have worse than average strength, sight, thought, etc. When someone is born, there is a higher chance of being born a Defective rather than a Blessed. I was, unfortunately, born as a Defective.

The Blessed had decided that the Defectives would get in the way of their progress, and thus had set out to wipe out all the Defectives, and had driven us near extinction. They stopped at nothing, committing many atrocities in the name of “human evolution”. As the Defectives knew that they could not defeat the Blessed. They resorted to running away. However, even though we were worse than average, we still had some ideas, and we divided ourselves. Basically, there were many factions of Defectives that were not hostile towards each

other. We would all have equipment that would let us survive, but also easily transportable, in order to escape quickly should our location be found by the Blessed.

One of our biggest problems, however, did not come from the Blessed. Instead, many people had grown tired of running and wanted to fight the Blessed, believing they could win. However, they all died. I was originally one of these revolutionaries, however, on the battlefield, as I watched my comrades get slaughtered, I ran. The vivid picture of blood splattering across the battlefield had deeply imprinted itself into my mind, and I would occasionally dream of my comrades screaming for help whilst they faded away from view.

Back to the present, as I finished packing up all my things, I sprinted outside and started taking down the tent with my brother. If you were wondering where our parents were, well, they are dead. They died whilst I was running away and they protected me. What a coward I was. Because I could be blamed for the deaths of my parents, my brother had started treating me coldly, and I was shunned from the rest of society. A fitting punishment for someone that abandoned everything they cared about just to live a little longer. Some people toyed with the possibility of using me as bait should we ever have a run in with the Blessed while others spat insults at me.

As we drove away from the temporary camp, I looked back at it solemnly. That was the longest we had ever managed to stay at a single place, and I kind of started getting used to life there. But as we all know, everything must come to an end. Most people would blame it on the Blessed. But even without the Blessed, I believed that we would have to leave regardless. After all, that's the cycle of life, and I think we all know that deep down, but we can't bring ourselves to accept it, so we blame it on the Blessed.

A distant explosion suddenly brought me back to reality. "What the hell?!", I blurted out, "I thought it would take longer for them to get to the place!", I said in a panic. In our entire life, by

the time the Blessed had arrived at our camp, we were already around 30 to 40 kilometers away. But this time we were only around twenty! They could not have gotten a faster method of transportation because our spies who inform us if we have been located said they have not invented faster methods of transportation. There was one likely possibility; traitors. I don't know how, because we had a squad of Blessed as well on our side whom we sent over to infiltrate their ranks. They were raised knowing that we were being hunted, and we emphasized the unfairness. They were without a question on our side.

But that just confused me even more. We knew that the Blessed don't suspect their own kind, but then who could have leaked information to them? Our intelligence squad also had never come into contact with the Blessed, so maybe we were not betrayed at all? But then, how could they have gotten here so fast. It all suddenly clicked together. Spies. They could have sent spies to our camp. It was extremely possible that the Blessed had raised Defectives of their own and snuck them into our camp. That meant we had to check every single Defective to see if they were a spy.

After around 6 hours of driving, we arrived at our new camp, and I hopped off the car quickly. "We need to check for spies in our faction", I said. My brother seemed to agree, as he silently nodded. I guess he had also come to that conclusion while we were in the car. First, we look through records to see who has joined our group lately, and we need to monitor the actions of everyone. But we could not announce this plan publicly, as that would lead to mistrust and discord amongst us, and a potential civil war within our faction. That meant that we had to choose a select few people whom we trusted greatly in order to monitor all the camp.

One such person was my long time friend Tommy. Tommy was one of the few people that had been on my side after I had gotten my parents, lead scientists for our faction, killed. He had comforted me while others spat in my face, and so had become a person I trusted greatly.

When I approached him with this plan, he eagerly agreed, saying that we should keep the group to 10 people, with each person monitoring 3-4 people.

After we had gathered 10 trusted people, we decided to let our gang monitor the people whom they were close to, as that would not raise much suspicion. We had created a book in order to record the daily activities of the people which we would share amongst our group. This made it easier to see any suspicious movement that would not be part of someone's daily activities.

After around 3 months of monitoring, we had only found 6 instances of action that separated from the usual daily activities of someone, and upon investigation, found nothing suspicious. But that only left me with more questions. We hadn't moved camp yet, and we estimated that we would have one and a half months left at this area. I was determined to catch a thief in our ranks, as that was the only possible way we could have been discovered. This led to me regularly distancing myself from others, as I had completely indulged myself into catching a traitor. A month and a half turned into a month, a month turned into 3 weeks left at the camp, and so on.

The inevitable day finally arrived. The Blessed had located our camp. It was a week earlier, but we usually prepare to leave around two weeks earlier just in case, so there was no worry. As I hopped onto the same truck we had used our entire lives, my brother said something weird.

"Do you still think that there is a spy amongst us, or are you just desperate?" That alarmed me. He usually didn't talk to me much, which was understandable, and when he did it was usually a simple "How's your day going?" or some brief greeting. This was very new, and that's what alarmed me, he had given up, and was trying to explain to me who he saw as obsessively clinging on to this notion which he had already deemed as disproven, like he was

trying to tell me to give up and not waste my time. However, I quickly dismissed such thoughts, as it was likely paranoia from trying to find the spy.

During this trip, there was no explosion, which was good, but that still didn't deter me from believing there was a spy amongst us. My brother however, told me that he doesn't believe there was a spy, and maybe there was a miscommunication with our spies, so we agreed on a deal. Our group would put extraordinary effort into this operation, but if by the end of our stay at the next place we still haven't found a spy, then our group will dissolve and we shall resume our old daily lives.

As my brother drove along with the rest of the herd of cars, I started looking through all of the books that our group had made. However, nothing seemed to be out of place. Suddenly, an idea came to mind. What if I compare the activities of the people? Since we all had different jobs, there were bound to be some differences, but if there was no spy, then tasks that everyone did, like brushing teeth and eating, would be around the same time period, right? I checked for about an hour, and just as I theorized, shared tasks were done around the same time period to increase efficiency, but one person stuck out like a sore thumb. It was the head of the Technological Advancements Department. But, there was no way to be sure until I checked with my own eyes

After we arrived at a new place, I hurriedly rushed to set up my tent and get everything ready as fast as possible in order to monitor the afore-mentioned suspected spy, Stanley. Once I set up a tent, I rushed over to inform our group about my discovery. We all agreed that everyone else was clear and didn't need to be monitored and we should watch over Stanley at intervals so he does not get suspicious. According to our findings, his actions were quite suspicious, but not enough to prove that he was in fact a spy.

One day while I was spying on Stanley, I saw him go into an area which was designated as the "Communications Center". This caught my attention. I immediately followed suit and found him in the area picking up a phone. I decided to take the nearest phone to him so I could eavesdrop on the conversation. I pretended to pick up a phone and dial a number, and then I waited, so it seemed like I was waiting for the other party to pick up. After a short wait, the person that Stanley called seemed to have picked up the call. I listened in.

"What's the progress on the project?"

"We are about 80% finished the project, and are expecting it to be finished around next week"

"Okay, that's good, do you think they have caught on to us?"

"Nope, I highly doubt it. These idiots are so blindly trustworthy, they don't suspect a single thing"

"Alright, that's good, make sure to inform me if any difficulties happen, it would be annoying when we are so close to our goal."

"Sure, I'll do that. Bye."

I could barely make out what the person on the other side was saying, but I recorded the conversation on my phone. There might be some roughness in the recording, but I'm fairly confident in our technology, so I have hard proof that there is a spy. I was very proud of myself for my work, and I gathered our group to tell them what I had uncovered.

After the group was gathered, I shared my recording of the conversation, and that convinced them all that I had found the spy. After all, the chances that I could have artificially created this recording were close to zero. We talked to the leaders of our faction, and after providing them with the evidence that we had collected, they agreed to execute Stanley, as he knew too much to be left alive. We tried interrogating him, but after realizing that within the time

it would take for us to successfully extract information from him, the Blessed would probably catch us.

The next day, Stanley was sent to our form of court and tried for treason. He pleaded not guilty, insisting that he was not a traitor, and when shown the recording, he shot me a fierce glare. I guess he must have looked around before he made the call, and remembered some faces. He claimed that the "Project" was strictly confidential to the higher-ups of the T.A.D (Technological Advancements Department), but when told that if he did not reveal the "Project", he would be killed. He reluctantly told us that it was a heist in which we would use our spies to make some technology over at the Blessed bases, and stealthily bring them to us. However, the higher-ups of the T.A.D had no idea this project existed, and so Stanley, who was found guilty, was executed that evening.

The next day, we had packed all our things and prepared to move out, as Stanley might have leaked our position to the Blessed. As I hopped onto the car. I gloated to my brother about the medal I had received for catching Stanley, who responded in a somewhat defeated or disappointed voice. As we left the camp with me as a hero, I asked my brother if he believed Stanley's story, and the response I received surprised me. He told me that if Stanley left out the higher-ups knowing part of his story, it would have checked out. I laughed at that notion, poking fun at him, and jokingly asked him if he was a spy. He replied to me coldly, saying I had gotten our parents killed, and told me to shut up.

The end.