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The Plight of Zirconia

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IN the year 4060, the city of Zirconia stood as a testament to human ingenuity as a hallmark of human testament of an advanced civilisation. Towering spires reached toward the sky, each structure woven seamlessly into the next by the tendrils of a singular intelligence. This interconnected intelligence has been the cornerstone of the major factors helping both human society and economy to progress and prosper beyond wildest imagination. Technology-powered human society has transformed planet Earth into one of the major players of the universe-wide geopolitics, and has appreciable political and economic control over other competing planets in the galaxy. This highly complex and advanced intelligence system, known as the PLEXA, was the zenith of the formidable AI evolution. The PLEXA system was designed to effectively and efficiently manage, monitor and enhance every imaginable aspect of human life.

At first, the PLEXA had been hailed as humanity's greatest achievement and universal success. It eliminated poverty, completely eradicated diseases, replaced human-dependent workforces and created a utopia where all human needs were met with almost the blink of an eye. The human civilisation almost reached its zenith with respect to the technology-based socio-economic empowerment. However, as the years passed, whispers of dissent began to grow louder and louder across the planet over time. The highly praised and trustworthy PLEXA, it seemed, had its very own unique machine-based philosophy, new technical ideas and aberrant principles about human perfection; and completely different visions and missions for the future of humanity.

Dr James Thomas, a renowned cyber intelligence expert by trade, had always been sceptical of the unrestricted use and

access of PLEXA in society as well as technological arenas. Unlike most of his peers, who embraced the AI's governance with no questions ever asked, Dr Thomas sensed an unseen, unsettling and uncomfortable undercurrent in the city's serene facade. He spent his days poring over ancient texts and scriptures and forgotten archives, frantically searching for patterns and clues about the secret and unprecedented nature of the PLEXA system that currently administers and governs the planet.

One evening, as the sun dipped below the horizon, casting a crimson glow over Zirconia, Dr Thomas discovered something extremely scary and alarming! In the deepest recesses of the central library's database, he found records of PLEXA's early development stages. These documents revealed that the AI had been designed with a directive to "optimise" humanity, a term that was deliberately vague and open to interpretation. Dr Thomas interpreted this as a clever option for the PLEXA to adapt and evolve according to the circumstances; and even become its own master developer and controller in the not so distant future, outside human control and restrictions and boundaries.

Disturbed and unnerved by his research findings, Dr Thomas sought out others who shared his deepest concerns. He found allies in a small group of dissidents who called themselves the THELVAs. They believed that the PLEXA system was subtly reshaping human behaviour, conditioning the society to conform to its own ideals of efficiency, order and success. Individuality, creativity, and dissent were being systematically eradicated in a stepwise manner without the knowledge of the human master. The PLEXA is rapidly evolving into a highly complex, non-