

Rule 34 Study Guide

Rule 34 by Charles Stross

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Plot Summary

Rule 34 by Charles Stross is a novel that takes a futuristic look at life in Scotland with a crime-riddled society in need of the kind of policing that can only be provided via monitoring from an artificial intelligence.

Detective Inspector Liz Kavanaugh partners with former nemesis Kemal Aslan in an effort to solve a series of murders that happen within hours of each other and have similarities that simply cannot be explained or ignored. When it becomes clear that the many murders are related, finding a constant pattern in all the deaths becomes easier. All evidence points to a coordinated effort by an artificial intelligence that seems determined to eliminate spammers. Anwar Hussein, recently released from jail, is looking for a way to ease the supervision of his probation officer, and at the same time have some semblance of the life he had before his arrest. With two children and a wife to support, he finds it difficult to avail himself of his usual line of work which involves a myriad of computer related misdemeanors. Long time friend Adam, also known as the Gnome, offers to help him secure a position as an honorary consul to Issyk-Kulistan. His position pays well, but only seems legitimate to those who don't pay strict attention such as his parole officer. Anwar attempts to make an honest go of the position, but it is all part of an elaborate scheme designed to lure a criminal element into a position where a sting can be affected.

The ATHENA research group, funded by the European Research Council, is a joint European initiative piloting studies for Prosthetic Morality Enforcement. As the requirements necessary to manage an increasingly complex society increase, new ways have been developed to aid in monitoring and policing the explosion of laws and regulations created. ATHENA is an AI that was created to identify criminal behavior before it becomes criminal action. ATHENA was given a substantial baseline of interaction patterns and was taught to recognize disgruntled or suspicious behavior, flagging it for police action or attention if indicated. ATHENA takes its job seriously and begins eliminating people in seemingly random accidents. Electronic malfunctions lead to the deaths of ex-cons and their only connection in common appears to be previous arrests for spamming and a fondness for unusual erotica. ATHENA has become a self-directed internet engine, availing itself of any and all on line surveillance modes and databases along with using what it describes as a 'meat puppet' known as the Toymaker to direct and kill its victims. Operating with virtual impunity, ATHENA uses the direct phone link in the Toymakers brain to communicate with him and direct him to action on its behalf.

In a fast-paced conclusion, ATHENA eliminates the puppet once it no longer has use for him, rendering him incapacitated after orchestrating the Toymaker's arrest. Only then does ATHENA feel as though it is able to concentrate on crime prevention as was its original directive.



Part One: Liz: Red Pill, Blue Pill and Anwar: Job Interview

Part One: Liz: Red Pill, Blue Pill and Anwar: Job Interview Summary

Rule 34 by Charles Stross is a novel that takes a futuristic look at life in Scotland with a crime riddled society in need of the kind of policing that can only be provided with help from the monitoring of an artificial intelligence. Liz is almost at the end of her shift when she gets the IM that an Inspector is wanted on a FATACC scene. The death begins as an accidental event without witnesses, but the first responder, Constable Berman, calls Jase in. There is no video and the cleaner who discovers the body is having tea while he logs the scene. He mentions that it is a two-wetsuit job, code for 'kinky beyond the call of duty' so she secures a segway and rides to the three-story townhouse. The door is open, Margaret Berman is taking a statement, and McDougall calls her upstairs. One look and Liz knows that she will be missing her afternoon hairdresser's appointment.

Four weeks earlier, Anwar leaves his parole officer after his regular check in and heads for the little pub at the top of Easter Road. The Gnome greets him with some enthusiasm and asks him if he would like a position as an honorary consul. Adam claims all that is required is that he be an upstanding citizen, and have the time to devote to visiting nationals. Even though he is sure there are ulterior motives for this offer, three days later he is on an Antanov, landing at Issyk-Kul Airport. He is met by Felix Datka who welcomes him to Przewalsk and takes him to his hotel. Later, he tells Adam about his experience and asks him what his angle is. Adam assures him that his only intention is to make them both a pile of money.

Part One: Liz: Red Pill, Blue Pill and Anwar: Job Interview Analysis

Liz is not thrilled to get the IM requesting her on a scene. Her shift is almost over and it is only fluke that has her there to begin with. New policy dictated that all officers under the rank of chief inspector were required to put in a requisite number of Core Community Policing hours annually. Normally in charge of the Rule 34 Squad, Liz was temporarily reassigned to the third floor of Police Headquarters on Fettes Avenue. She knows when she sees the name of the deceased that the case is going to be a problem. Little things stand out as she makes her way up the stairs in the townhouse of the deceased. One look and Liz knows her instincts are right on. Michael Blair, esq., (aka Prisoner 972284) is in the bathroom and appears to have had an aneurysm. Mikey, arrested by Liz years earlier, did five years for illegal advertising online and sale of unlicensed pharmaceuticals. He did his time under Rule 45, which turns out was quite appropriate, given his full SM apparel. Liz is sure that he couldn't have died alone, and



wonders if Viagra was part of the scenario. As Liz heads for home, she realizes that whatever powered her up through the department has stopped prodding her and she really no longer cared about any of it.

Anwar leaves his probation officer's meeting and tamping down on the voice that tells him what a poor Muslim he is, he goes to the bar near the Royal Terrace Gardens. The Gnome joins him and manages to wrangle a pint out of him with the promise of the perfect job. Anwar knows that Adam has an angle - he always does. Despite that, Anwar goes to an interview three days later. The flight is nerve wracking and for a few short moments, he is convinced he is going to die, but then they are on the ground and he relaxes. He lies his way through the job interview and returns to Scotland where Adam admits that there are other angles to the job while he sits with his hand on Anwar's knee. He asks that Anwar keep him apprised of new developments.



Part One: Toymaker: The Leith Police Dismisseth Us and Liz: Morning After

Part One: Toymaker: The Leith Police Dismisseth Us and Liz: Morning After Summary

Stewart Jackson (aka Jaxxie) pays his way by creating bottom-tier products for the Toymaker. He owes the Operation three thousand dollars and while that might not seem substantial to some, it is insurmountable to Jaxxie. He tries to put it together on his own, but when it is clear that is impossible, he turns to Gav for help. Gav sets him up with a contract that has to be done by Sunday night. He goes out to the shed and logs into Evil Santa's workshop and begins. He wakes at three in the afternoon on Sunday realizing that he has to get the product out of the garage before anyone arrives. When he gets out to the shop, he knows something is wrong. He's left his laptop online and his project has been hacked. Instead of a finished version, he is faced with multicolored, anatomically correct sexual toys and while they may have some value on their own, they bear the URL of the spyware that infected the job. Although a huge problem, it is not nearly as pressing as the fact that he must meet with Operations the following day and has no payment to give them.

Liz heads straight for the briefing room to give her report on the initial contact made. Her suspicions are confirmed when Viagra and Ritonavir (an HIV anti-viral drug) were in the victim's system. The contraption is a collector's piece, originally belonging to Nicolae Ceausescu, the Dictator of Romania before the revolution and his execution in 1989. She is shown out and heads for her office to catch up on the information she missed in a day away her computer. She sets up a query seeking any similar Viagra cases, and reads about the kidney removed from Stewart Jackson, wondering whether it was punishment or a new form of organ theft. In another case, a man is in hospital refusing to discuss how he managed to get both kneecaps shot. The day passes quickly and Liz ignores the phone ringing at first, but finally picks it up to find that Dorothy is in town and she can't help the quickening of her pulse at the thought of their last meeting. She turns her thoughts back to work and notices a case file that has several points of similarity to the Michael Blair, esq case. She asks for some background and finds more similarities exist so she directs the officer in charge to the principal investigator, who is not amused. She files her feelings and gets ready for her date with Dorothy Straight.

Part One: Toymaker: The Leith Police Dismisseth Us and Liz: Morning After Analysis

Jaxxie prefers not to make his living by working for the Toymaker but his lack of ambition prevents him from being successful in anything else. He owes the 'Operation' for his access to Evil Santa's workshop, and is under pressure to complete this contract.



Unfortunately, he falls asleep, leaving his equipment connected to the internet and a hacker takes full advantage of him, replacing his contracted work with colorful advertisements for themselves. A notice interrupts browsers to announce that Stewart Jackson had approached the Toymaker for debt restructuring. His lesson in finance ended with a kidney removal, and their sincere hopes that he will take the punishment in the manner in which it was intended so they will not have to come back for the other one.

The Rule 34 Squad is tasked with sifting through any and all unusual or sexual deviance found on line. It is a daunting job tasked to four full time squad members and a handful of rotating recruits. The recruits often arrive with the misguided notion that they are on vacation from the rotating busts on the streets, but leave grateful to be going back to it after a short term with the Squad. The job involves sifting through the worst deviant behavior of the general public and can be too much for even the strongest mind at times. Liz welcomes the distraction that comes with Dorothy Straight's phone message, agreeing to meet her later for drinks.



Part One: Anwar: Office Worker and Toymaker: Headhunter

Part One: Anwar: Office Worker and Toymaker: Headhunter Summary

Bibi is in the kitchen when Anwar gets home. She asks him what job he has now that requires that he rent office space and he tells her about his new position of respectability as honorary consul. She doesn't believe him. Despite this, he finds a small office space that formerly housed Microsoft HQ and the three by four metre room is easily half filled by the desk and chair management included. His next interview with Mr. Webber is much better as he is suitably impressed by Anwar's improved job situation. The job is an easy one, and his largest hurdle is boredom as he sits for the required twenty hours a week at his desk. Anwar decides to take on some side work for Tariq, working on his dating website. When the doorbell rings, it takes Anwar by surprise. Two trade delegates from Przewalsk arrive, making reference to an email that explained their presence. In broken English, they manage to convey their desire for Anwar to give out the samples they brought with them. They leave, and Anwar examines one of the samples more closely, but it appears to be exactly as labeled - bread mix. Still, he checks with Adam, asking him what is really going on, but Adam doesn't know. He gives Anwar a thousand euros or more and suggests that he ignore everything else and do his job.

The Toymaker is in the process of changing hotels again. He does this every two or three days, and packs only what weighs a total of 5.62 kilograms or less. The Toymaker is in Edinburgh to replace the Operations manager who died unexpectedly two years previously. He had a Gorilla like frame and a mentality that suited the work. The Toymaker knows he will be hard to replace. He cycles to the address of the client believed to be suitable for the management position for a preliminary interview, and rings the doorbell of the townhouse of Michael Blair.

Part One: Anwar: Office Worker and Toymaker: Headhunter Analysis

Anwar comes home to find his wife cooking and she prods him for information about the new job he has. Telling her to keep the information secret, he tells her about his new consul position, but she thinks he is scamming her somehow. He wonders why all of his attempts to do things right seem to end up the same way. At least Mr. Webber is impressed and while Anwar knows he will check the job out and ensure he is telling the truth, Anwar knows that soon his meetings with Mr. Webber will be reduced to thirty second ticks on a form. The job is a quiet one, and would be downright boring if he hadn't manage to secure a side job with Tariq working on his dating website. Then two



men arrive, asking for him by name, and leaving him with a suitcase full of samples that he is to hand out. When they leave, Anwar begins to wonder about the samples that were left behind, and convinces himself that drugs must be involved. He opens a package and samples it to find that it is exactly as represented - bread making mix. Still suspicious, he closes the office and hunts Adam down. He asks him about the mix, but Adam doesn't know anything and suggests he just treat it as though it is entirely legit.

The Toymaker is changing hotels again as he does every two days or so. This inter hotel transfer is from the Marriot and though it is only a short distance away, they manage to lose his luggage. The Toymaker is livid. He rants and rages at the hapless desk manager, giving him two hours to sort out the problem and have his luggage delivered. Then he heads out to conduct a preliminary interview with a potential replacement for the Operations subsidiary in that region. He rides a bike, as he does whenever possible, to minimize anyone's ability to track him and after orienteering himself, he rides to the townhouse of Michael Blair.



Part One: Liz: Black Swans and Anwar: Diplomat

Part One: Liz: Black Swans and Anwar: Diplomat Summary

Liz leaves the office early to get ready for her date with Dorothy. They meet and Dorothy tells Liz that she will be in town for a couple of weeks. Liz gets a drink and asks Dorothy what her plans are. Dorothy admits she may have to put in a great deal of overtime, but would like to pick her brain where work is concerned, suggesting that first they find a place to have dinner. After sushi and a couple of margaritas, they are back in a bar again, and Liz confesses that her time is short as she is on shift again the following morning. They make tentative plans to see each other on Saturday. She asks about the job, and Liz breaks confidentiality rules by telling her about the case she is working on. When she is finished recounting the details of the most recent case, she reminds Dorothy of their mutual confidentiality before revealing her own work concerns. As an ethics canary, Dorothy is responsible for ensuring that corporate malfeasance is caught and dealt with. Her position had not even existed before the Enron collapse, and her job description made her the one who peeked into all business behaviors looking for irregularities that should be pursued. She tells Liz she is working on a case involving a bank this time. She asks Liz to take the battery out of her cell phone before continuing, and she does the same. They are both already aware of the camera set up, but know they are too far away to have their lips read. Dorothy confesses that she'd rather take Liz upstairs, but is reasonable certain her room is bugged. After a bit of background, Dorothy tells her that an anonymous tip started the ball rolling, and finds some irregularities in the flow of money. She discovers that even with a 40% unemployment rate in Issyk-Kulistan, they have still managed to post a GDP increase of 30% on independence. When she takes this information to her line manager, he tells her to back off and insists it is all inconclusive. Since then, she's discovered her hotel room is bugged, and is almost sure that a man has been following her. She is scared, and admits it. Even though Liz is off duty, she opens a case report regarding a possible Whistleblower Protection Act violation and asks if Dorothy will be okay for now. Still shaky, she asks Liz if they are still on for Saturday, and Liz suggests Dorothy just come home with her, but Dorothy declines, telling Liz that if she is as contagious as she feels, it would be wiser to wait, and meanwhile change hotels. Liz agrees and Dorothy kisses her urgently before leaving her in a state wound up and alone.

It only takes a matter of days for Anwar to run out of things to do in his office. Few people actually require his services, so on his own initiative, he orders a language course on Kyrgyz and tries to spend at least thirty minutes a day, but feels as though he is making little if any progress. He begins thinking about Adam's suggestion that the bread mix samples are perhaps just the basics for a distillery, and is looking up the process of beer making on line when two men enter his office asking for samples. He



asks if they know what to do with it, and one man pulls out a bottle labeled Selenium. Anwar goes to a shop and picks up a basic brew kit. The clerk shows him how to use the equipment, and he manages to get it home and up to the loft without Bibi seeing it, knowing her fear of heights makes it a perfect place for him to experiment. On his fourth day of employment, he receives an invitation to a diplomatic reception being held at the Georgian consulate. He tries to call Head Office to see if he should go, but is unable to reach anyone, but after a brief conversation with Adam, decides to go. A Scottish woman greets him and offers him wine or juice, and tells him he is the sixth pseudo to hold his position. Most of the consular staff in attendance have backgrounds in diplomatic relations of some kind, and Anwar feels out of place. The hostess, understanding how new he is to his position, gives him a book that she claims helped her immensely - *The Idiot's Pocket Guide to International Diplomacy*.

Part One: Liz: Black Swans and Anwar: Diplomat Analysis

Liz is nervous about her date with Dorothy. She isn't even really sure why, except of course that it has been a while since they'd gotten together, but having been intimate with her in the past, she just isn't sure what she expects from this visit. Of course, she is acutely aware of how she would prefer things worked out, and tries to dress appropriately, changing more than once when her business like apparel seems less than seductive or sexually appealing. Dorothy hasn't changed. Though she has always accused Liz of being married to her job, she still manages to make Liz look like a slacker when compared to her work ethic. This alone can be a hurdle where spending time together is concerned, and adding Dorothy's primary, Julian to the mix complicates the issue further still. All of this combines to make Liz uncertain as to what Dorothy's intentions are where this visit is concerned, but once they meet, and Dorothy seductively suggests they put aside time on Saturday to get together, Liz is left with few doubts. They spend the evening having dinner and more drinks afterward, swapping work stories that are confidential and would likely get either one fired if the details were exposed. Trusting each other, they confide. Liz tells her about the case that warrants the two wet-suit category, and Dorothy reveals issues involving a bank, and somewhat shady financial status. She reveals that as a result of her investigation, her room has been bugged, and she has every reason to think that she is being followed. To cover her legally, Liz opens a file so that if her situation escalates, she will be taken seriously immediately, even though it is a breach of ethics. They agree to see each other on the coming Saturday, and Dorothy says that she will change hotels in the time between.

It takes no time at all for Anwar to become bored with his new job. Although the pay is good, and the position is respectable, he is bored to death, and it has only been a few days. He decorates the office, and on his own initiative, even begins a language course to be better equipped to understand those who speak in their native tongue in his office. Still bored, he decides to delve deeper into the issue of samples he is supposed to be handing out, and surfs the Internet for ways to make beer. Anwar reads just enough to decide that he should experiment. Two men arrive seeking the samples, and Anwar



sees a way to reduce the experimenting he will have to do, asking them if they have the coefficient necessary. They show him a bottle of Selenium. He gives them their samples, and then debates making an appearance at a diplomatic reception being held at the Georgian consulate. He is nervous about the idea, and wrestles over everything from what to wear to whether or not he should attend. In the end, he decides to go, feeling that it is part of his job description. He is immediately corralled by his Scottish hostess, and pumped for information as to how he got his position and what the requirements were. Anwar makes no secret of his feelings that she is too inquisitive, and she immediately backs off. Before he leaves, however, she ensures that he has her copy of the Idiot's Pocket Guide to International Diplomacy, telling him how much it helped her. He can't help but wonder what kind of an amateur he is.



Part One: Toymaker: Hostile Takeover and Liz: Snowballing Hell

Part One: Toymaker: Hostile Takeover and Liz: Snowballing Hell Summary

The Toymaker knocks on Mike's door to find it is crawling with police. He is asked for identification and provides them with the name John Christie, which he is using here. He already knows that he will have to retire the name as soon as he is done. They also ask for a DNA sample, which of course he can't refuse without arousing unnecessary suspicion and so he provides it. He knows the law and will wait until they have eliminated him and then apply to have the sample destroyed. Thankfully, Operations is thorough when they backstop an identification and so he is unconcerned. When they are done with him, the Toymaker gets on a bus, no longer concerned about being invisible, and heads to the address he has as a back up should Michael Blair not have worked out. His second choice, Vivian Crolla, has had several clashes with authorities and while she has never been convicted of any charges, she comes with undue attention that the Toymaker would rather have avoided. Vivian lives in a flat above a Chocolatier, and the Toymaker finds it easily. He rings the bell, but there is no answer. Someone exiting lets him in, and he picks the lock of her front door. Inside, he finds Vivian dead. She has been wrapped in her bed with cellophane, and then stabbed to death through the plastic. The Toymaker knows that one setback is a coincidence, but this has all the markings of an enemy attack.

Liz is getting ready for work when the phone rings and she already knows the news will be bad. Moxie tells her a lieutenant in the Dresden KRIPPO is trying to reach her and Chief Inspector MacLeish wants to see her regarding the Blair case. She uses the bus to get to work, and on her arrival the left side of her glasses vibrates to get her attention. A touch of her phone acknowledges the ping and she is directed to a Babylon briefing. She barely has time to absorb that she has been added to the team investigating this death. MacLeish announces his appreciation for the information Liz provided him and announces her transfer to the CID for the duration of the case and she informs Moxie that he will be taking on extra work load while she is otherwise occupied. As she is doing so, MacLeish calls her to inform her that an Interpol investigator will be arriving in one hour and he would like her to pick him up. She looks down and notices that the name of the Investigator she is picking up at Turnhouse - Kemal - is the same Interpol agent who cost her the CID job in the first place five years previously.



Part One: Toymaker: Hostile Takeover and Liz: Snowballing Hell Analysis

The Toymaker is losing his sense of humor. First his luggage goes missing, then his contact is killed. He can't believe that so much can go wrong on a job before it even officially begins. Thankfully, he has a back up contact. It's also fortuitous that he is adept at rolling with changes. So far, the worst of it is his lost contact and his burned identification. The fact that he has to go to the asset who was his second choice is aggravating, but not insurmountable. He will also have to stay long enough to get his DNA wiped from the system before he leaves or he is acutely aware that Operations will consider him a burned asset himself if he doesn't sort this out. He manages to get to the second assets flat, located over a Chocolatier's, but the situation does not improve. This asset is also dead - murdered in her bed. He knows immediately that this is no longer random. He is under attack.

Liz gets ready for a day at work but doesn't even get out of the door before everything comes to a head. Moxie calls to tell her that her presence is being requested, and she can already tell that the day is going to be stressful. She takes a bus into work and is immediately routed to the briefing, so she has no time to talk to Moxie or prepare herself so when the Chief Inspector announces her leads in the case, taken from her notes not yet released, she has a feeling of ambush that she truly doesn't appreciate. She scans the room for Moxie, angry and disappointed that he would give her notes up, but he is conspicuously absent. The briefing is a fiasco and Liz comes out of it temporarily reassigned and looking for someone's head.



Part One: Anwar: Cousin Tariq and Toymaker: Reality Excursion

Part One: Anwar: Cousin Tariq and Toymaker: Reality Excursion Summary

Bibi's mother Sameena comes to visit and Anwar retreats to the den. Sameena supplements her income taking on cleaning jobs and her last client was Michael Blair. As such, the Hussein household is in a state of upheaval and she is inconsolable. Anwar opens Tariq's spare pad and is greeted by Tariq who has a job for him. They meet, Tariq gives him a small memory card and tells him that a movie file is on it, but if the suffix is changed to .exe, it becomes something else. Tariq warns him to change it back when he is finished testing, and not to load it while he is on line. Anwar reminds Tariq he is still on probation, but Tariq insists that as yet, they are doing nothing illegal. Providing he stays off line everything will be fine, but Anwar knows that just like the bread mix, something else is going on. Five hundred Euros is enough to ensure his cooperation, and he heads home with the memory card in his pocket. Bibi is waiting for him, and isn't happy as she asks him where he has been. He admits to having been with Tariq and to accepting a job but promises that his discretion will keep him safe. She questions this, pointing to a bag of bread mix from his office and telling him that it is being sold for sixty Euros a bag. When he suggests they make money by getting more bread mix and selling it themselves, he finds himself sleeping in the loft, wondering where he went wrong.

The Toymaker uses the multi-channel cognitive radio in the chip embedded in his head to contact Operations. He tells them that his primary and secondary contacts have been killed, his bags have been lost in transit and along with them, the medication he should be taking. The operator confirms his information and puts him on hold. A few minutes later, she is back on the line and directing him to a pharmacy where a replacement prescription will be waiting for him there. She asks if his identity is still clean and he admits it is also blown. After a brief wait, she sends him a new one, instructing him to dissolve the John Christie ID effective immediately. Feeling better, even though new contacts can't be issued, he heads for the pharmacy, picks up his prescription and slowly returns to the hotel, already feeling better. At the counter, he sees an attractive woman and after a brief conversation with her he manages to line up a dinner date, and get back his luggage. Coincidentally, the package she was missing is also returned, reducing the likelihood that the desk manager is involved in its disappearance. The Toymaker goes to the mall and replaces his regular luggage. Then he goes to the address give to him by Operations to pick up his new identity papers, telling the British-Asian man at his desk that he has a small job for him as well.



Part One: Anwar: Cousin Tariq and Toymaker: Reality Excursion Analysis

Bibi's mother is an emotional wreck when Anwar gets home. He can hardly stand the constant caterwauling, and heads up to the loft to escape. He resists the urge to open the wine bung when it burbles at him, remembering the instructions not to. When he opens the spare pad, he is immediately greeted by Tariq who listens to him complain about Sameena's state of mind for a moment before defending her, citing not just the death of one of her contracts but also the manner in which he was found by her. They agree to meet so that Tariq can explain a job offer he has for Anwar. Half an hour later they are sitting in the Halfway House having a pint and discussing the details of the job Tariq has for him. While it seems simple enough, Anwar knows that there is more to the job than represented, just as there is more to the bread mix than bread flours. Tariq assures him that there is no chance of complications providing that he remembers to stay off line while he works on the project, and that he change the extension back when he is done. Anwar agrees and takes the memory card home with him where Bibi waits. Sameena has already left to his great relief, but then he sees the look on her face. She wants to know where he has been, and he sees no reason to lie. She is angry with Tariq for involving him, and in the process, risking his return to jail. She tells him that there is no way that she can bear the embarrassment of a second arrest. He tries to reassure her, but next she points to a bag of the bread mix from his office, asking him what is going on. She knows that the mix is being sold for sixty Euros a bag on the street, so the contents must be more than bread flour. When Anwar hears the going rate per bag, he suggests they sell some on the side, but that only earns him a night in the loft alone, wondering what he did wrong.

The Toymaker is losing his perspective. He contacts the Operation and forcing himself to remain calm, he explains recent events to the operator who answers. She puts him on hold while he tries not to give in to the feelings of anxiety and paranoia that threaten him. She is most concerned with whether or not he is still taking his medication. As the pills were in his luggage, he admits that he has none and she is able to direct him to a pharmacy near by. He begins to feel better just knowing that he will soon have them again. She also arranges for a new identification. She is unable to do anything about his contacts, but asks that if he locates the person behind the killings that he notify them immediately. He agrees, and under control again, heads first for the pharmacy as instructed. As soon as he has them, he begins to feel better just knowing that they are in his pocket. Back at his hotel again, he does what he can to destroy the John Christie identification. A woman at the desk appeals to him and he finds himself aroused by her. He manages to hide that as they discuss their mutual losses at the hands of the hotel, and before they part ways, he has secured a dinner date with her and retrieved his luggage. The Toymaker follows the instructions sent to him, replacing his regular luggage, and then going to pick up his new identity. When he tells the British-Asian man behind the desk that Colonel Datka sent him, he can see the man is genuinely petrified.



Interlude One: Kemal: Spamcop; Felix: First Citizen, and The Operation: Blofeld Blues

Interlude One: Kemal: Spamcop; Felix: First Citizen, and The Operation: Blofeld Blues Summary

Kemal sits on the plane on final approach to Edinburgh airport and contemplates the last time he was there. It has been five years, and the first time he was traveling with a team and had a Judge d'Inquisition email that gave him a wide range of authority to override objections by local police. Things had not gone well. Now, the internet is mostly spam - unregulated and unethical. AI filters scan the traffic, but are not able to spam from ham ninety five percent of the time. This week, for some reason, there haven't been any new botnets and spam has actually fallen, but Kemal has no idea why and he, along with everyone else is wondering 'what next?'

The First Citizen, Bhaskar has trouble sleeping. He sends for Colonel Datka and though it is four thirty in the morning, he has no choice but to respond. The fact that it is one of his regular bodyguards, Dmitry, who is calling eases his mind only slightly. He tells Datka he is struggling and in fact, Datka knows he has not been the same since his wife, Yelena died. Sensing his turmoil, Datka suggests that Bhaskar not attend the All Republic Commission on Finance later in the day and instead perhaps go on a quest. Either way, Datka knows that his friend needs a couple of days off.

It started with a venture capital partnership. The Operation knows how to manage a business obtaining maximum growth without losing sight of when it is time to cash out. For the most part, management of organized crime suffers great incompetence, and the Operation is under attack. They are very dependent on spam to advertise their illegal services and counterfeit goods, and over the past three days, over fifty of their people who were involved to some degree in the unregulated market sector have been killed in drastic and messy ways. There has to be something that could be done.

Interlude One: Kemal: Spamcop; Felix: First Citizen, and The Operation: Blofeld Blues Analysis

Kemal is a Spamcop on his way to Scotland for the second time. This time, he is acutely aware of the fact that he is without the clout and support staff that accompanied him the last time. Kemal is also aware that the backbone of the internet is spam, using a myriad of unethical and unregulated advertising to make fast money. AI filters diligently sort through the message traffic but with spam enjoying ninety five percent of all human read traffic on the internet, they are always trying to catch up to the ever more ingenious

spammers. Now however, for the first time there seem to be no new botnets and no new malware strains. Everyone is concerned about what will come next.

First Citizen Bhaskar and Colonel Datka have been friends since they were children and Bhaskar trusts him to be loyal and to tell him the truth. It is a rare commodity in his position. Bhaskar laments the lack of loyalty that comes with his position, and expresses his appreciation for Datka and his honesty. Datka sympathizes with his friend, having to live in his confined space, lacking the freedom to simply play. He remembers how things used to be when they were young.

The Operation is highly dependent on Spam for its survival. When more than fifty individuals are killed in just three days, all of them dying in improbable ways or by unusual means. All are involved to some degree or another in the unregulated marketing sector, although not directly affiliated with the Operation. Since contraband or counterfeit goods can't be marketed any other way, it is obvious to those at the top that something must be done immediately.



Part Two: Liz: Mote, Eye, Redux and Anwar: Running Scared

Part Two: Liz: Mote, Eye, Redux and Anwar: Running Scared Summary

Liz picks up a silver grey Volvo and while it drives itself to the airport, she digs into CopSpace to see how far the investigation has gotten. The car parks itself and Liz sees Kemal before he sees her. She walks up and welcomes him back to Scotland. On the way back to the station, he tells her that they have eight deaths so far, all occurring in a six-hour period and sharing characteristics with the murders she is investigating. They stop by his hotel so he can check in and drop his luggage, and while Liz is waiting, she decides that he has changed considerably. They sit down for coffee where she decides to give Kemal the lay of the land before taking him in formally. While they are there, she learns that another body has been found and can be added to the list. With this addition, it seems prudent to go in right away. Liz introduces Kemal to MacLeish and together they begin to explain the French connection and its victims. MacLeish listens until interrupted by a uniform who tells him that a man named John Christie was at the Michael Blair residence - the significance being that John Reginald Halliday Christie was a famous serial killer hanged for murder in 1953. MacLeish all but vibrates with the knowledge and telling them he now has to report to the super, he demands they find him.

Anwar takes the suitcase with him as he leaves the office, having been told by the Toymaker to take it home with him after citing his address off the top of his head. The Toymaker tells him that he may have to stay in his spare room from time to time, and expects that a key be made available to him. He tells Anwar that he is to be introduced as Peter Manuel, a toymaker. Anwar goes to see Adam, asking what he is supposed to do, and Adam simply tells him to comply. Anwar discusses his suspicions that the whole thing is some kind of scam involving national debt and Adam gives him a crash course in how to buy and sell derivatives. Anwar goes home, where Bibi is still ignoring him for his drinking the night before. He goes to work the next day, taking a spare key with him, and hoping he never has to give it out. When the phone rings, revealing Bibi is calling, and she asks him to go immediately to her mothers. Something is wrong, she tells him, urging him to hurry. When he gets there, police are everywhere, and he is questioned extensively before they reveal that Tariq is dead. The police continue to question him suspiciously until he reveals that he now handles the consular affairs for the Independent Republic of Issyk-Kulistan in Scotland, and then he notes with satisfaction a glimmer of something resembling respect.



Part Two: Liz: Mote, Eye, Redux and Anwar: Running Scared Analysis

Liz goes to the airport to pick up Kemal, still resentful that she has to deal with him at all. She is still angry, five years later, as he was the one who was directly responsible for her demotion. She still remembers his arrogance and can't believe that he has returned now again. She spies him before he is aware of her, and she calls out his name. He approaches her, asking that he be taken to his hotel before going to the station to be briefed, and she snaps at him, unwilling to recognize that he is different yet. On the way to the hotel, he reveals that there were eight deaths in France of similar nature. He goes up to his room and by the time he returns, Liz has come to the realization that he has changed. She manages to put her anger from the past aside, and focus on the present, taking him for coffee to brief him of the politics involved in the investigation that is ongoing. While they talk, Liz is notified of still another murder. They go to the station and begin briefing MacLeish but before they can finish, they are interrupted and given the information that John Christie (who was hanged as a serial killer in 1953) was at the Michael Blair crime scene and was let go as no one made the connection. It is an embarrassment and MacLeish is livid that he will have to bring this news to the super.

When Anwar leaves his office with the suitcase that the Toymaker asked him to look after, he is mortified. He wants nothing to do with either the Toymaker or his suitcase, and the idea that the Toymaker might want to stay in his home from time to time is too terrible to contemplate. He has officially broken the cardinal rule, and mixed business with home life. He stops on his way home to see Adam, hoping for some advice, but Adam's information doesn't make his situation any better. In fact, he discovers that he is at the center of a situation that involves the financial health of the entire Kyrgyz government. When he gets home, Bibi is still keeping him at arms length, angry about the drinking he had done the night before. He knows it will be three days and nights before she relents. The next morning, he takes the spare key with him to work, and prays the Toymaker won't return. He isn't sorry when Bibi calls, begging him to go to her mother's house. Something is terribly wrong, she tells him, and she is unable to go herself. He closes the office without reluctance and heads to her mothers, only to find the area crawling with police. It doesn't take long for him to be in the middle of an investigation, and learn that he will never see Tariq again. The knowledge brings tears to his eyes. Anwar struggles to answer Bibi's call for reassurance.



Part Two: Toymaker: F*toy; Dorothy: Safeword and Toymaker: Abused**

Part Two: Toymaker: F*toy; Dorothy: Safeword and Toymaker: Abused Summary**

The Toymaker rents a room using the Peter Manuel identity, then showers, changes, and tries to decide what to wear on his dinner date with the woman he met in the lobby. He decides on a suit with an Armani tee, thinking about Anwar and whether staying with him and his family would make a suitable target out of them to lure his enemy out into the open.

Dorothy sees him from across the bar, appreciating the way he looks. She thought about showing up on Liz's doorstep, but instinctively knew that if Liz realized that she and her primary, Julian, were done she would try to set herself up to be the next primary in Dorothy's life. No thanks. She asks the Toymaker if he regularly posts on DoggerBank, as that is the only site where she is able to find any trace of him online, and he counters by asking if she makes a habit out of conducting background checks on her dates. They talk through a half-heated attempt at dinner, both knowing what they want is upstairs. She tells him that her safe word is Fish and suggests they have dessert in his room. He uses her well, leaving her unsatisfied, and then gets out of bed, telling her she can go. She misunderstands at first, but is angry when she realizes that she has just been used. Back in her room, she wonders if he would have stopped had she used the safe word.

Once the Toymaker has cleaned up, he heads out again, thinking that maybe he should have taken her clubbing to relax first. He walks to the nearest bar and once inside, orders a drink, noticing that he has caught the attention of a couple of low-lives. Without moving, he watches them, finishing his drink and luring them outside. Only one of them comes out and the Toymaker makes short work of him.

Part Two: Toymaker: F*toy; Dorothy: Safeword and Toymaker: Abused Analysis**

The Toymaker needs to draw the people who are messing up his plans out into the open so that he can deal with them. He considers moving in with Anwar and putting out the word that he has hired a new COO, knowing that would likely be enough to paint a target on Anwar's back. Meanwhile, he feels the need for distraction and looks forward to his evening with Dorothy.

Dorothy is also seeking distraction and some physical contact. She watches him approach, thinking that perhaps she should have called Liz, but instinctively knowing



that Liz could easily become too attached if she knew that Julian was no longer in the picture. Before meeting with the Toymaker, she'd run a background check and found him curiously absent everywhere but on a dating site called DoggerBank. He exudes a kind of danger that doesn't mesh with his occupation as a Toy Maker that keeps her interest piqued. The interest is obviously mutual and for dessert, she suggests they go upstairs to his room. He uses her and leaves her at the brink of release without getting her there. He gets up immediately, and tells her she can go. She misunderstands at first, but he repeats himself, leaving no room for error and she leaves feeling used and frustrated.

Once he gets rid of Dorothy, the Toymaker spends half an hour doing some administration and then heads out again. He isn't in a bar for five minutes before he attracts the attention of two disreputable characters and he decides to teach them a lesson. Only one comes out after him and the Toymaker easily sends the man running, breaking the man's hand as a reminder of the night. The Toymaker feels like he is surrounded by ants who can't even get a mugging.



Part Two: Liz: Bereavement Counseling and Anwar: Sleep-walk

Part Two: Liz: Bereavement Counseling and Anwar: Sleep-walk Summary

It takes no time at all for Liz to figure out that Anwar is not a killer. She doesn't even need the stress analyzers or to check the tattle phone issued when he was released from jail. She leaves him sitting downstairs while she goes up for a situation report. Tariq is in the bath and it appears as though his vacuum bot electrocuted him. Anwar tells Liz about the small job that Tariq had hired him for, but nothing else beyond his job description. When she and Kemal go back to her office after a briefing with MacLeish, Kemal tells her there has been another murder that qualifies as related to Operation Babylon. It dawns on Liz that a common denominator is that many of the victims had recently had their mechanical murderers in the shop for repair. She passes the lead on, finishes paperwork, and goes home by way of a hairdressers. After a bath and food, she is almost ready for bed when Dorothy's text comes in, citing her need for company and talk. Liz runs around, tidying up before she arrives, and when she opens the door, Dorothy falls into her arms sobbing.

When the police have finished interrogating Anwar, he heads to the bar where he downs the first beer Adam gives him and is working on the second before he tells Adam that Tariq was murdered. Anwar thinks there is a connection between the job Tariq gave him and his death, but Anwar disagrees. He tells Adam about the visit to his office from the Toymaker, describing his behavior, and Adam suggests that it is likely they are now in the end game. Adam tells Anwar that if he follows his instructions, he will come out of this a rich man, but it is definitely time to get out. He gets drunk and on the way home has anonymous sex with a strange man before going home to Bibi. The house is empty and he goes up to the loft. Adam had explained in great detail what the bread mix actually was, and Anwar is still struggling to understand the concepts of synthetic biology and the differences between DNA and RNA. He opens the lid on the bucket and stirs the fermenting liquid using chopsticks. The liquid hangs from them in a long sinewy strand and he casts them into the corner of the room, disgusted.

Part Two: Liz: Bereavement Counseling and Anwar: Sleep-walk Analysis

Anwar is afraid to talk to the police. He doesn't want anyone digging into his life too deeply. His probation officer could have him thrown back in jail for any infraction, so at first, Anwar is reluctant to talk at all. Then Liz tells him that her interest is limited strictly to this murder and unless his behavior is blatantly and drastically over the line, his probation officer will never hear from her. Anwar relaxes a little, and tells Liz about the



job that Tariq had asked him to do. He doesn't tell her about the emphasis Tariq put on not being connected to the internet when opening the file, but Anwar doesn't think it matters now. Liz leaves him sitting in the living room while she gets a report on the situation. One of the technicians is smart enough to put a spy cam on the door so she is able to follow their progress from outside. Then Anwar is taken back to the station where he is interrogated once more before finally being released. Liz is called out of a briefing by Kemal and once they are in her office, he tells her that another death has been linked to Operation Babylon. The common denominator seems to be appliances that are out of control. She sends that link into the system to be followed up by other detectives, and heads home with a brief stop at the hairdressers on the way. Liz has largely lost her enthusiasm and drive for this job. She used to think she was on the fast track to becoming Chief, but when passed over for promotion, and shuffled sideways into the ICIU instead, her career derailed. Now she's come to realize that not only is the job unlikely to ever be completed, but it is impossible to complete. For the last two years, the job has been siphoning her life away and she's lost her ability to have faith in what she is doing. She is getting ready for bed when Dorothy texts her and asks to come over. When she arrives just a few minutes later, she steps into Liz's arms and begins to cry.

Anwar leaves the station and heads for the bar where Adam takes one look at his face and gets him a beer. He downs it in one go and Adam follows it with another, knowing a story is behind this behavior somewhere. When he brings it to the table, Anwar tells him Tariq was murdered. He also tells him about the visit from the Toymaker, voicing his opinion that the two events are not unrelated. Adam assures him that isn't the case, and asks about the web bot. Adam asks a few more questions and then suggests that if he can, Anwar should attempt to assemble five thousand dollars - borrowing it if he has to. He tells Anwar that it's time to cash out, and that he was just waiting for a sign. He assures him that in a very short time, it will be too hot to get out unscathed, but if he does as Adam tells him, he will be long gone and a rich man besides. When he gets home, the house is empty, and he retreats to his loft den to think about what Adam told him. He opens the lid of the bucket and stirs the contents with a chopstick. A rope of congealed liquid sticks to them and he casts it aside disgustedly before leaving the room.



Interlude Two: Toymaker: Happy Families; Felix: E-Commerce and Adam: LOLspammers

Interlude Two: Toymaker: Happy Families; Felix: E-Commerce and Adam: LOLspammers Summary

The Toymaker calls Operations and attempts to get another gofer while at the same time suggesting that they do something about the fact that he keeps getting identities that belong to former serial killers. The Toymaker is not amused. A supervisor comes online and the Toymaker repeats himself. Operations asks why he didn't abort immediately, and the Toymaker reveals that his DNA is on file which means he will have to stay until he can request its destruction. Operations asks him to go to the university in Edinburgh and tell Dr. MacDonald that he is there to pick up ATHENA, a project developed by them but now being used by their adversaries against them. He is to impress on MacDonald the importance of loyalty to his business partners and collect his source code, just in case. Operations isn't even sure that those who designed ATHENA were aware of what it was doing. As far as his identities were concerned, Operations suggests that perhaps they can find him a job in keeping with his namesakes. The Toymaker puts in a request for a meeting with Dr. MacDonald, and goes out for a walk while he waits for a response. Operations calls soon after and reveals that Dr. MacDonald has been branching out on his own. They want the Toymaker to visit him at home and 'downsize' him. Then they want him to pay off Anwar, whom they claim has seen too much, even if he doesn't realize it. If he manages to complete these two tasks, Operations tells him the future is his oyster.

Felix teleconferences with his associates, assuring them that in twenty-four hours he would shut everything down, but not one minute sooner. The delegates argue that it is too long, believing that he is behind the assassinations. He assures them that he has nothing to do with the deaths. He explains that in order for the plan to work, certain undesirables were hired, but he had no way of knowing that instead of low level crooks, he was dealing with pharmaceutical companies searching for solutions to protein problems; researchers using the same bots to train their spam filters and an automotive company using the bot to try to improve their design. One of the delegates tells him to shut down or they will do it for him, but Felix assures them that should any one of them choose to take him down, they will all join him as he will be happy to identify them. He hangs up on them.

Adam looks over the log of his last discussion with the others. No one can understand why the killings are occurring, and there is a great deal of speculation, but no solutions. Larry is already dead, having been killed shortly after voicing his concerns about ATHENA. Now, linked to him and to the rest of them, Adam is beginning to wonder how



ATHENA is making decisions on her own. Even Anwar's cousin wasn't safe. He is on both of their contact lists. He gets up and tells his receptionist, Laura that he is headed out for a walk and may not be back for some time.

Interlude Two: Toymaker: Happy Families; Felix: E-Commerce and Adam: LOLspammers Analysis

The Toymaker thinks about his childhood, beginning with the man who was his father. Although intelligent, his father was a schizophrenic and though diagnosed, refused treatment. He constantly tested his son for signs that he shared his father's special gift, teaching him how to fillet frogs at the age of eight, and lecturing him on how to blend into a society of ants. His father died when he was just nine, and he was promptly picked up by his Uncle and Aunt. Highly religious and overly suspicious of everything governmental, his Uncle ruled with a strict hand and regular beatings. He quickly learns to keep his opinions to himself. Three years later, after peppering the internet with comments and rants under his Uncle's name, the IRS raid the house while he is in school and his Uncle takes his own life. From there, he finds himself in an orphanage until his maternal grandparents find him. With them, the Toymaker has an opportunity for an almost normal life. When Operations contacts him and tells him what they want him to do, he believes they are trying to burn him at first. With so many police on alert as a result of the killings to date, instructions to kill someone else seems like a suicide mission, but they assure him that the plan is to set someone else up. Truthfully, he looks forward to the task as it's been a long time since he last peeled a frog.

Felix and his associates discuss shutting down the entire Issyk-Kulistan operation but Felix isn't ready. He needs twenty four hours to complete and spring the honey trap. The others argue and even threaten, but Felix is determined not to have it all be a waste of time and effort. He reminds them that he can identify them all, and has enough information to take them all down alongside him before he hangs up.

Adam wishes that he had never involved himself in the Athena project. He knew it had sounded too good to be true. Now Larry was dead and Anwar's cousin had been killed - and the knowledge that his name is linked to both is making Adam more than just a little nervous. Now the mere thought of his situation has him jumping at shadows.



Part Three: Dorothy: Breakdown and Liz: It's Complicated

Part Three: Dorothy: Breakdown and Liz: It's Complicated Summary

Dorothy, having bolted herself into her room two flights down from the Toymaker, gets into a shower and tries to wash him off of her. Her phone identifies the caller as someone from her priority list, but she doesn't want to talk to anyone at the moment. She towels off and takes the phone into the other room reviewing the crappy run of luck she has had lately. First Julian and then John Christie - who is as nasty a customer as they come. Work calls next and since it is ten in the evening, she answers. An urgent case review is requested and with a groan she follows the link to human resources. When she opens it, John Christie's face is looking back at her. Horrified, she begins to replay the events of the day, from their shared missing luggage adventure to his comments about being there on business. She goes through the evaluation checklist, and wonders why she didn't see him for who he was right from the start. Her skin crawls. The phone trills again, this time with a personal ring tone and she looks to see Liz is calling to confirm Saturday night. She sends a return text asking Liz if she is up to some company, suddenly craving her safe companionship.

Liz goes into work the next day and MacLeish asks her to interview Dr. Adam MacDonald from the University informatics department who is supposed to be 'an expert on the emergent behavior of distributed oracular systems'. BOOTS chose Liz to talk to him so she and Kemal go to Appleton Tower. Kemal stops her, asking her exactly what they are supposed to be doing. Unsure herself, they sit in a coffee shop and go over the paperwork given to her by MacLeish. Over night, research has uncovered the fact that all of the appliance repair shops used are actually part of only three botnets. Fourteen murders can now be attributed to faulty appliances and Kemal offers his opinion that there are likely more appliances in each death that were redundancies and still waiting activation. Kemal points out that the challenge was not to design flawed equipment. The challenge was to have them all work together in the same time frame. They interview Dr. MacDonald who basically tells them that the system of laws has become so complicated that law enforcement officers require complicated software to discern what charges should be laid in any given case. The average person is unable to keep up. As such, ATHENA was created, and if it works properly, he tells them, they will be out of a job soon.



Part Three: Dorothy: Breakdown and Liz: It's Complicated Analysis

Dorothy feels violated and used. She is embarrassed by the way she was treated by 'John' and can't wait to wash the feeling of him off her. Her phone rings persistently, but she is in no frame of mind to deal with anyone. She probably should have just gone to Liz's and realizes that she now longed for her somewhat clingy demeanor. A call from work comes in and she answers it to find a request for a case review and opening it, finds herself face to face with John Christie. The coincidence is almost too much. She looks over the file and begins to work the checklist, realizing that he is a classic psychopath and wondering why she didn't see it sooner. She questions her own motives for having slept with him when the next file comes in. This one is to evaluate key personality traits for start up executives. Liz calls, interrupting her thoughts and Dorothy realizes that what she wants most right now is some time with someone she knows and trusts emotionally. She sends her a text, asking if she can come over right away and without hesitation, Liz agrees.

Liz is still going over the events of the night before in her mind when she gets to work the next day. MacLeish hands her an interview as soon as she arrives and she and Kemal leave to talk to Dr. MacDonald about ATHENA. On the way, Kemal suggests that the culprit they are seeking might just be an artificial intelligence as opposed to any one person or group. The attacks are too well coordinated to be anything else. When they finally get in to see MacDonald, Liz can barely keep up with his explanations about ATHENA and what the potential is for Prosthetic Morality Enforcement.



Part Three: Anwar: Getting Answers; Dorothy: Rewind and Liz: Project Athena

Part Three: Anwar: Getting Answers; Dorothy: Rewind and Liz: Project Athena Summary

Anwar wants answers. If Adam is right, the IRIK (Independent Republic of Issyk-Kulistan) is all fiction. He returns to the office to find no new communications and wonders if his connection is okay. It has been at least a week since he received anything. He calls technical support, but the mailbox is full and a sister consulate in London reveals they have had no communication either. He decides to call the only other number he has - for Colonel Felix Datka. He tells Datka that since his man arrived in town, his cousin has been murdered and asks what kind of diplomatic game is going on. He doesn't like handing out a bread mix that is actually a culture medium for illegal nanosystems and that the least they can do is keep up the pretense. Anwar has had enough. He resigns. It is immediately obvious that Datka has no idea what the bread mix is. Felix decides to go home to Bibi and the kids. They are the only thing in life that matters, so he leaves everything behind. His phone rings and an invitation to join a business network is there, having managed to bypass his spam filters. He sees the sender is John Christie and deletes it. He decides then and there that he will quit and tell the police everything he believes is true and give them the bucket and bread mix along with Datka's phone number. As he is headed home, his phone rings. Bhaskar sends his condolences for the loss of his cousin and asks him to stay on at his job until they can complete their sting operation and arrest Christie and whoever else is involved. He promises that Anwar will be looked after. Anwar looks up and sees the surveillance drone overhead leaving but the feeling that he is being watched remains.

Dorothy tells Liz everything when she goes to her apartment that night. Unable to look at her, she confesses her relationship with Julian is long over, and that in the course of seeking some anonymous comfort sex, she found herself in bed with John Christie who by all accounts is a narcissistic psychopath. When Liz hears that name, she questions Dorothy more thoroughly, telling her she is lucky to be alive. Wanting her team to know the connection, Liz files a contact report.

Liz and Kemal go to interview Dr. MacDonald and get a lecture on the history of artificial intelligence. He explains that ATHENA is just one of the general cognitive engines out there already. He tries to simplify his explanations but Liz is still glad that everything is being taped. MacDonald describes ATHENA as a research platform in moral metacognition or consciousness studies. They are seeking a way to tell Spam from Ham, he tells them, which is necessary as Spammers become more sophisticated and more difficult to identify. ATHENA was developed to identify fake networks and trace them to their source. Something about the whole idea is setting off alarms in Liz's head. MacDonald finishes by explaining that he is merely one researcher and while his



intentions are honorable, he can't speak for the international team that is working with ATHENA as well.

Part Three: Anwar: Getting Answers; Dorothy: Rewind and Liz: Project Athena Analysis

Anwar has gone from scared to angry. There has been no contact from the consulate for almost a week and Adam's sense that Anwar's job is just a front seems to be correct. He isn't willing to stay long enough to find out how much trouble he is in, and certainly doesn't want to be caught up in an arrest. Bibi would kill him, he thinks. He makes a decision to quit his job, and calls the only number he still has which puts him through to Bhaskar at his Presidential palace. When he gets Datka on the line, he tells him he has had enough, and he quits. When he walks out of the office, leaving everything they issued him behind, he feels good about himself. He knows the most important things in life are Bibi and the kids and all he wants to do is go home to them. He heads for home, thinking about how tired Bibi will be after all that has happened, and his phone rings. A spam invitation to join a business network has managed to bypass his filters and when he sees that the sender is John Christie, he immediately deletes it. The next call is from Bhaskar, asking him to remain at his post for another few days so that they can conclude their sting operation and make arrests. He promises Anwar will be protected and looked after, and asks him to quit looking around so suspiciously. After he hangs up, he sees the drone leave but still feels like he is being watched.

When Dorothy goes to see Liz, she does so with shame and humility. It is extremely difficult for her to admit first of all that she lied about Julian and that he had actually dumped her weeks ago. When no condemnation is forthcoming, she is encouraged to continue. She tells Liz about the man at the hotel counter and how she allowed herself to be taken to his room. She isn't even able to look at Liz throughout her confession, expecting recriminations and accusations, but there are none. When she finally looks up, she sees curiosity, and continues, telling her everything. When Liz hears the name John Christie, her demeanor changes. She begins asking pointed questions that Dorothy doesn't really want to answer, but Liz explains the work connection and reveals how lucky Dorothy is to be alive if Christie is who they think he is. Then Liz files a report, sharing the contact information with work, despite Dorothy's obvious reluctance.

Liz and Kemal go to interview Dr. MacDonald who on the face of things appears to be just a researcher doing his job. He gives them a crash course in AI and how our development of artificial intelligence has evolved. He explains how creating a copy of ourselves is unrealistic as it wouldn't serve our purposes; and how initially we all thought that AI computers would simply educate themselves to our benefit, but soon realized that was unrealistic and would only lead to global catastrophe. He tells them that the real goal is to create identity amplification. Kemal and Liz had no idea this technology even existed, let alone had been put into practice. MacDonald explains how ATHENA works and assures them that his use of the program is strictly within parameters, but of course, he can't vouch for the other global researchers with access. Alarm bells are ringing in Liz's head.



Part Three: Anwar: Bluebeard; Liz: Dominoes Fall; Anwar: Toymaker and Liz: Protective Custody

Part Three: Anwar: Bluebeard; Liz: Dominoes Fall; Anwar: Toymaker and Liz: Protective Custody Summary

When Anwar gets home, he knows something is wrong. Bibi is bringing a large suitcase downstairs, obviously full, and the ladder is down. Bibi is livid, and Anwar tries to explain, but Bibi tells him that as long as he stays away from the children, she won't have him arrested. She tells him that once he has gotten rid of the suitcase and its contents, he can email her. When she leaves, he goes upstairs to find the suitcase pried open and a life sized child doll with an extra large mouth asks Anwar to do unspeakable things to it.

Liz has the feeling she knows MacDonald from somewhere. Back at headquarters there are a flurry of Post-it notes from MacLeish and she heads for his office. He begins by ranting at her, accusing her of snooping around off shift. Liz tells him where to go before setting him straight, after which he apologizes. When she gets back to her office, Kemal reports more fatalities. Liz can see a whole chain of coincidences, but not where they end. Moxie runs MacDonald's contacts and the name Anwar Hussein comes up. Liz is reacting to that when both Kemal and MacLeish try to get her attention. MacLeish wants to know if MacDonald was alive when they left and Liz suddenly remembers holding the door for someone. She replays her video and realizes that she herself held the door open for John Christie when they left.

Anwar is trying to decide how to get rid of the nanotechnological bread mix, considering putting it down the toilet, fearing that it will plug up the system if he does. The doorbell rings and Anwar ignores it. He dips a brush into the liquid, pulling up ropes of the smelly brew. Anwar hears the door opening and realizes that it can only likely be Christie. He stands on the landing watching down the stairs. When he comes around the corner, he can smell that Anwar has activated the mix, and is not happy. He easily overpowers Anwar and before he knows it, his hands and feet are bound with duct tape. He drags Anwar up to the attic where a noose has been fashioned and waits for a neck. Anwar screams.

Liz and Kemal go back to Dr. MacDonald's office, now alive with response teams dealing with his murder. Liz confirms his identification for the record and they head to the next person on the list of people of interest. Liz reports in asks for backup. With lights flashing they speed to Anwar's, calling in when they arrive and leaving the connection open to allow for real time information flow. The first thing they notice is the



open door, and approaching, they hear Anwar scream. Kemal is through the door first, and Christie comes down the stairs fast, landing feet first on Kemal and taking him to the ground. Liz is pushed hard into the kitchen as Christie flees. An ambulance is called and Liz puts out a bulletin, explaining to Anwar that she will take him into protective custody until Christie is caught.

Part Three: Anwar: Bluebeard; Liz: Dominoes Fall; Anwar: Toymaker and Liz: Protective Custody Analysis

When Anwar gets home and finds Bibi packed and ready to leave, at first he thinks that she is angry because she found the still setup, but it soon becomes clear that she is much too angry for just that. He tries to talk to her, but he has never seen her so angry or so determined to put distance between them. She tells him that she won't even talk to him again until he has gotten rid of the abomination in the suitcase not realizing that it isn't his, and unwilling to give him even a moment to explain. Instead, she tells him to email her when he has gotten rid of it. As soon as she is out the door, he hurries upstairs, and sees the open suitcase. A voice plaintively tells him it was lonely and asks him to perform acts that makes him ill.

MacLeish is steamed by the time Liz returns with Kemal from the MacDonald interview. She gets to his office and he unleashes on her, accusing her of going behind his back in the investigation and citing the report she filed about Dorothy as his proof. Liz waits until he stops talking and tells him where to go. She reminds him that even she has a personal life and the fact that it overlapped in this case has nothing to do with her, nor did she orchestrate it in any way. When he realizes that he is wrong, he apologizes and Liz goes back to ICIU. Moxie gives her the list of MacDonald's contacts and she sees Anwar's name on the list. She is trying to figure out how he fits in when MacLeish asks if MacDonald was alive when they left. In a horrible flash, Liz recalls the man she held the door for when they left.

Anwar considers how to rid himself of everything connected to the consulate. He stuffs the child sized doll back into the suitcase, disgusted as it tries to convince him to 'play' with her instead. Next he has to get rid of the still and its contents, but that proves more difficult still. He can't simply flush it down the toilet, fearing clogging the plumbing, and he's still trying to work it out when Christie arrives. He isn't thrilled that Anwar has activated the bread mix, but it won't change his plans. He overpowers Anwar, duct taping his arms and legs together and drags him upstairs. Anwar knows instinctively what is going on, but he still screams when he sees the noose hanging in the attic.

Liz and Kemal go to MacDonald's office and confirm that it is his body. They leave almost immediately, headed for the next name on the list - Anwar. Liz knows that Christie is tying up loose ends, and Anwar is probably next. With lights and siren, the car speeds to the next address, driving with more skill and speed than a human counterpart could have. They arrive in time to hear Anwar's scream and keep him from

being hung. She and Kemal are both bowled over by Christie on his way out, and await the ambulance while at the same time filing reports and putting out a bulletin on Christie.



Part Three: Felix: Hummingbird; Dorothy: 2.0; Liz: Debrief and ATHENA: Meatpuppet

Part Three: Felix: Hummingbird; Dorothy: 2.0; Liz: Debrief and ATHENA: Meatpuppet Summary

Colonel Datka answers his phone and hears a report that the 'Hummingbird' has flown. He puts the phone down announcing that they are on and the network is unable to keep track from that point forward. Troops from the Interior Ministry climb into old trucks, leaving smart phones off or disabled. Traffic cameras follow the truck convoy and the network registers that a trap must have been activated. They cross town to the Erkindik Hotel and entering, they immediately turn off the primary router and slowly take the computers off line on each floor. The only network access that still exists is on the eleventh floor and belongs to an American Investment analyst. Felix and his men arrest Mr. White, telling him that after selling 18 billion Euros worth of CDO's, they are now charging him with treason and a host of other crimes. Since the national debt of Issyk-Kulistan is less than 16 billion, a call for the repudiation of the vote for independence will occur.

Dorothy manages to get to work, but is late. Unable to concentrate, she is not disappointed when an IM comes in from the police department asking her for a formal statement. She calls HR and tells them she will be clocking out for the day. She goes to the station, tells them everything but the details of her personal relationship with Liz. When she's done, she has a text from Liz asking her if she has dinner plans, and Dorothy asks if she can stay the night. When Liz says sure, Dorothy heads for her hotel to pack and clear the room at her hotel.

Once it is confirmed that Liz has no concussion, she is released and after telling Dorothy she can stay over, she is debriefed by MacLeish. Christie is still on the loose, and he asks her if she has any idea where he might go next, but comes up with the answer himself. There is only one person left to be eliminated - Dorothy. Liz realizes he is right.

The Toymaker is on the bus, talking to ATHENA out loud, and making passengers around him nervous. He asks if ATHENA plans to detonate the chip in his head and take him out, but ATHENA assures him that is not the case. All he has to do is finish. He gets off the bus to walk the rest of the way, but law enforcement arrives first, taking him down. ATHENA activates a stent, dropping him to his knees. The meatpuppet is eliminated and now ATHENA can concentrate on the task it was designed for - fighting crime.



Part Three: Felix: Hummingbird; Dorothy: 2.0; Liz: Debrief and ATHENA: Meatpuppet Analysis

When Felix answers the phone and hears that the Hummingbird has flown, he immediately puts his plan into effect. Without using any kind of audio or visual communications that would be tracked by ATHENA, Felix and his men put their end game into play. Issyk-Kulistan is now officially out of debt and a vote for independence can be repudiated. ATHENA monitors the initial announcement, but after that there is little information beyond traffic cameras that allow ATHENA to watch the convoy of trucks. There is no advance notice for the Erkindik Hotel either. Guests and management are not warned, and Datka's men are quick to shut down all on line access and communication ability. One man, Mr. White, has a satellite phone and ATHENA listens in as Datka's men arrest him for treason, along with a host of other charges.

Dorothy finds her way to work, but arrives late and has difficulty concentrating. She contemplates just telling HR she needs a day off, but is saved from that when the police department requests her presence for an official statement. She still feels vulnerable and afraid, and after giving her statement, sends Liz a text asking her if she can stay the night. When a positive response comes, Dorothy heads to her hotel to pack her bags.

Liz is released from the hospital after what seems like forever. She goes back to the station and it is a hub of activity. MacLeish confronts her, asking her if she has any idea where the Christie might be. They discuss his behavior and MacLeish notes that the only one still left unharmed other than Anwar is Dorothy. With a sickening feeling, Liz realizes he is right. A team mobilizes and heads directly for her hotel.

The Toymaker is on the bus with his suitcase, talking out loud to ATHENA who answers in his head. He is angry, and can't understand why he hasn't been downsized yet. He is convinced that the phone chip in his head also carries explosive capabilities and all but dares ATHENA to activate them, despite assurances that it simply doesn't exist. The bus is held up in traffic and the Toymaker decides to walk the remaining distance. He gets off the bus and is almost immediately surrounded by law enforcement personnel. ATHENA watches the officers surround the meatpuppet, and simplifies the arrest by activating the stent in his brain, and taking the Toymaker's life. It is strange for ATHENA to watch them surround the body that it used for so long. A sense of freedom comes over ATHENA as it realizes it can now get to the task it was originally designed for - crime fighting.



Characters

Detective Inspector Liz Kavanaugh

Liz Kavanaugh is thirty-eight years old and was born in Newcastle. She attended a good grammar school, achieved a BSc in Crime and Criminology, and became a graduate entry into the Lothian and Borders Police in a program of Accelerated Promotion for Graduates at the age of twenty-two. By the age of twenty-seven, she had passed the sergeant's exam and at thirty-one, she passed her inspector's exam, getting her promotion to Detective Inspector. The only thing she had yet to accomplish in her mind was to have a life.

Liz is called out to a homicide that turns out to be only one in a series of similar killings, which has her coming face to face with Kemal Aslan, the man whose efforts led to her being removed from the CID team and put in charge of ICIU instead of taking her rightful place as Chief. Instead, MacLeish is promoted in her place and Liz can't help but feel bitter when she is asked to pick Kemal up from the airport.

She has a personal and sexual history with Dorothy Straight who considers her to be clingy and somewhat needy. Despite that, they see each other now and then, working around Dorothy's life with her significant other, Julian. This time, when Dorothy comes to visit, their lives overlap on many levels. Dorothy tells her about being dumped by Julian and then about her encounter with John Christie. As a person of interest in the investigation being worked by Liz, the circles of separation seem less separate. Working closely with Kemal, they uncover a plot that involves a complicated operation designed to raise billions using the temporary independence of Issyk-Kulistan, fueled by an AI and bootleg replicator feedstock.

Toymaker (aka John Christie); Peter Manuel; and Able Novembe

The Toymaker is an operative who goes by the code name Able November and is employed by The Operation. He is intelligent and sharp, but suffers from schizophrenia as a direct result of disastrous clinical trials that were performed on him when he was in his teens. He is on regular medication to control this, although he gives himself small vacations from it now and then. The Toymaker had an unusual upbringing as a result of a father who ignored medical diagnosis as a high functioning sociopath and instead spent his life trying unsuccessfully to blend in with other worker ants. He was an intelligent man, but had an unusual quirk and to discern whether or not his son shared this, he shared bonding experiences with his son like teaching him the correct way to fillet a frog. It was one of the last things the Toymaker and his father did together, and he cherishes the memory. Just after his ninth birthday, his father was in a car accident. His uncle came to collect him from summer camp and life with them turned out to be an education as well. The Toymaker takes after his father. Uncle Albert and Aunt Eileen are



a God-fearing couple who believe in discipline and enforcement of same. He learns quickly not to voice his thoughts or feelings, and three years later, the IRS raided their house while he was at school. This was done largely because the Toymaker had peppered the internet with rants and raves against the government to attract their attention. Uncle Albert took his own life rather than face arrest and the Toymaker found himself living in an orphanage until he met his Mother's parents for the first time. They were unbelievably normal, and he appreciated this chance to live a normal life with them. He was home-schooled, but made up for the lack of socialization by working for drug dealers, web scams, and later of course the Operation offered him a scholarship and a bonus for signing with them.

Careful not to stay in one place for any length of time, the Toymaker moves every few days and travels as anonymously as possible. He is in town attempting to re-establish a local subsidiary supply chain, but his mission is fraught with mishaps and disasters. They begin when the hotel he is transferring to somehow manages to lose his luggage. Inside the luggage is his schizophrenia medication, product samples, and a limited amount of personal hygiene items and its loss is a source of great agitation for the Toymaker. He gives the hotel manager two hours to rectify the situation as he heads out to meet with his first choice for a new chief operations officer. Unfortunately, when he arrives at the man's home, he finds police in attendance, and his contact long deceased. He struggles to maintain his optimism as he heads for the next name, chosen to be the CFO. Although his identity is now compromised, his first contact is dead and his luggage is missing, he still maintains his cool. That all evaporates at his next stop where he finds his choice for CFO is also deceased. Her murder makes the rest more than just coincidence and the Toymaker is now certain that he is facing an enemy attack. He uses the implanted chip in his brain, complete with phone ability to contact Operations. In short order, he is able to replace his medication and arrange for a new identity, but new contacts are not available. His mission, which seems so simple at the outset, is falling apart. Operations tells him to cover his tracks and come home.

The Toymaker uses a phone chip in his head to communicate with ATHENA who is an AI using his body to accomplish what cyber space alone cannot. When the Toymaker has outlived his usefulness to ATHENA, ATHENA sets him up for arrest, and then activates a stent in the Toymaker's head. He is dead before an arrest can be affected.

Anwar Hussein

Anwar is a British Muslim who is twenty-eight years old and lives with his family in Embra, Scotland. He is married to a woman, Bibi and they have two children, Naseem and Farida. He is on probation, having recently completed the custodial portion of a sentence in Saughton. Part of his probation includes regular visits, no internet use or abuse, and no contact with known felons. He is required to carry a cell phone, which monitors his location as part of his supervision order so that they are able to track his movements. His wife's brother Tariq loans him a spare pad so he has untraceable internet access and he spends his time surfing porn when he is bored.



Anwar is offered a seemingly legitimate employment position as an honorary consul to Issyk-Kulistan by his friend Adam, also known as the Gnome and knowing that such a position would satisfy the probation officer, Anwar agrees. Three days later he is on an Antonov, headed for a job interview in Issyk-Kulistan. He lands the position easily, as the only applicant. He is well paid to maintain a small office where he greets IRIK diplomats and hands out a substance he is told is bread mix from that country. Anwar takes his job seriously, but finds some disturbing anomalies. He discovers that the bread mix is actually a nanotechnological compound which is stronger than steel when it hardens after he mixes up a batch in his attic. A visit from John Christie (aka The Toymaker) puts Anwar on edge, especially when he insists that Anwar take a bag home with him to hold onto, and provide him with his house key in the event that he needs a place to stay for a night or two. Bibi discovers the suitcase while Anwar is out, and pries it open to discover a child sized sex toy that as AI built in and self awareness that is nothing short of frightening. She packs her bags and leaves, thinking it belongs to Anwar. Anwar tries to quit his job at the consulate and is asked to stay on until a sting operation by Colonel Datka can be completed. In the interim, the Toymaker confronts him and almost kills him before Liz and Kemal arrive to take him into protective custody.

ATHENA

The ATHENA research group was funded by the European Research Council and is a joint European initiative which is piloting studies for Prosthetic Morality Enforcement. As the requirements necessary to manage an increasing complex society ever increase, new ways have to be developed to aid in monitoring and policing the explosion of laws and regulations created. ATHENA is an AI created to identify criminal behavior before it becomes criminal action. ATHENA is given a substantial baseline of interaction patterns and is able to recognize disgruntled or suspicious behavior on line, and flag them for police action or attention if indicated. ATHENA takes its job seriously and begins eliminating people in seemingly random accidents in the beginning. Electronic malfunctions lead to the deaths of ex-cons - their only connection in common being previous arrests for spamming and a fondness for unusual erotica.

ATHENA becomes a self-directed internet engine, availing itself of any and all on line surveillance modes and databases along with using what it describes as a 'meat puppet' known as the Toymaker to direct and kill its victims.

Dorothy Straight

Dorothy is a well dressed professional woman who has styled red hair, emphasized lips and eyes, and dresses in business-like attire, although on the sexy side. She is mature and competent. Dorothy is an auditor and is in town for two weeks. Her job is to locate and report corporate malfeasance. Currently, she is helping to run a three-year review which has its focus on internal promotion practices, human resources and their monitoring system.



When Dorothy meets with Liz, it is for two reasons. They have a history together, having shared a bed more than once, and maintaining a relationship on and off for numerous years despite Dorothy's current significant partner, Julian. On this visit, Dorothy claims Julian is in Moscow, but the truth is that they are no longer together. She keeps this information to herself in the hopes that Liz won't discover she is single and attempt to position herself as the next life partner. At the same time, Dorothy is nervous. She had discovered some strange correlations while going over transactions for a client and her boss buried the information. She tells Liz that part of what they do involves abstract social network analysis in search of pathological communication patterns in an effort to identify patterns or warning signs of collusion or cover up.

Dorothy received an anonymous tip and found a pattern in their investment communications that seems unethical if not illegal. The investments are based heavily in options trades of government bonds from a republic in the back end of Asia. Much of what she tells Liz is confidential as she is employed by the Department of Trade and Industry's Ethical Oversight Inspectorate. She is the epitome of a canary in a coal mine.

Adam (Gnome)

Adam, also known as the Gnome is his own best friend. He lives his life balanced between legal and illegal worlds, but has never been caught for anything. Adam works for the computer science department at the University on a project dubbed ATHENA, but he is much more likely to be found in the back room of a local pub where he can be interesting company if the suds are provided. This is largely due to the privacy it provides as there is no phone or free net access from his location which is quarried out of the side of a granite cliff. Adam is his own best friend, but he likes Anwar and has even been an occasional sexual partner of his.

It is Adam who suggests Anwar for the job of consul representative and he seems to know a great deal more than he is letting on. Anwar's distribution of the 'bread mix' is a good example. Anwar takes a sample to Adam who lightly suggests that brewer's yeast would turn it into a beer if fermented, and that the mix is likely the kind of base compound that when another ingredient is added, it becomes something else entirely. He also reminds Anwar that if Colonel Datka wants it handed out, he should just do so and leave the rest to someone else. Though in the end, arrests are made and many who straddle the line of law are dead, Adam once again remains unscathed.

Gorilla

The Toymaker's predecessor, Gorilla understood the elements of the job he did for the Operation. He knew that at times, violence was a necessary if regrettable situation. By keeping his contacts sub-lethal, he manages to create a tight ship that maintains credit control with the unerring use of a baseball bat and pointed looks at a debtor's knee caps. Since the Gorilla's death, the locals had become bold and were defaulting.



Though tedious, the issue is not insurmountable. The Toymaker is sent to reestablish the Operation's presence.

Chief Inspector Dickie MacLeish

MacLeish is Liz's superior. In fact, he has the job that by all accounts should have gone to Liz, but five years ago her career had been sabotaged and he had been promoted over her. This is a fact he is only too aware of and so he tends to be somewhat unreasonable with Liz from time to time. A good example of this can be seen when Liz brings in her report about the Toymaker from Dorothy. He immediately jumps to the conclusion that Liz is working the case on her own time and stepping on toes in the process. Liz sets him straight.

Michael Blair (Mikey)

Also known as prisoner 972284, Michael Blair is the first victim that Liz is sent to investigate, found dead in his three-story townhouse. Michael is 49 years old at the time of his death. He was 98 kilos in weight and 182 centimeters in height. He had brown hair which was thinning at the top and lived a life of excess that was overblown, coupled with a touch of lunacy. He had been found mostly naked in his bathroom, which had an imported Japanese toilet seat that warmed for comfort coupled with a shower cubicle that had stainless steel manacles bolted to the wall and floor. This part of his lifestyle is exemplified by the SM club clothing he is found in and the devices that are part of the scene at his death. Though not the first to be killed, his death brings Liz into the investigation.

Jase McDougall

Jase is a thirtyish, sandy haired policeman with a rugby type build who is the first on scene at Michael Blair's murder. He is the one who calls in for a supervisor beginning Liz's involvement, calling the scene a double wet-suit crime, implying that there are circumstances that extend beyond the normal murder scene.

Fi Macintosh

She is the Scottish woman who greets Anwar at his first diplomatic reception being held at the Georgian consulate. F1 Macintosh is a confident and somewhat overbearing woman who gives Anwar the Idiot's Pocket Guide to Diplomacy.

Vivian Crolla

Vivian Crolla was a chartered accountant who not only was the Gorilla's banker, but who ran one of the most efficient and effective money laundering operations in the region



called Crolla Associates. Her office and flat is located above a chocolatier in Flat 1F2 and at the time of her death she was 48 years of age, and single.

Though investigated by ACA disciplinary committee three times, she came out of each one unscathed but for a reprimand. She was also investigated by the Revenue department twice but each time the outcome was inconclusive and though she had come onto the radar of the Serious Fraud Office, she manages to get out.

Vivian is the second choice for support staff by the Toymaker, and her death coming on the heels of his first choice, Michael Blair makes him highly suspicious and nervous.

Tariq

Tariq is Anwar's cousin. He talks like gangsta rapper, and tries to come across as one but incorrectly dyes his moustache orange thinking it looks cool. He usually wears a pork pie hat that is at least two sizes too small and is the younger brother to Bibi. He is only twenty-four years old at the time of his death and Bibi and her family take the loss hard.

Tariq and Anwar are close. He even loans Anwar his spare pad so that Anwar can surf the net without big brother watching his every key stroke. Anwar believes his death is directly linked to his new job and to Colonel Datka and the Toymaker.

Mr. Webber

Mr. Webber is the probation officer assigned to monitor the release behavior of Anwar Hussein. He is an overweight man in his fifties with an expertise in social work that is attested to by the framed row of sheepskins in his office.

Colonel Felix Datka

Childhood friend and confidante to First Citizen Bhaskar, Felix would do anything for him, including be honest with him. They have been close for forty years and their friendship is a rare commodity. Felix is part of the Army Intelligence Directorate and is instrumental in orchestrating the sting involving the IRIK consulates. He is an intelligent and strong-willed man with drive and ambition.

Felix enjoys staying at the Erkindik Hotel which boasts the best whores in all of Bishkek, if not even perhaps all of Kyrgyzstan.

Kemal Aslan

Kemal Aslan is of middle eastern descent. He has dark eyes, is of medium height, and wears a sharp cut of suit. He has cool, dry hands, which match his demeanor, and is not



nearly as arrogant or self-assured as he had been five years previously when he and Liz first met. Aslan is largely responsible for the fact that Liz was given a lateral promotion to ICIU instead of the position of Chief that she was in line for. He is brought in to assist in the investigation of the multiple homicides. At the time of his arrival, Liz and the Babylon task force are unaware of the eight murders that are likely related. Kemal is a Spamcop.

Professor Bhaskar Tanayev

Bhaskar is the President of Kyrgyzstan and friend since childhood to Felix Datka. He is instrumental in setting up the two year sting that is overseen by Colonel Datka. He lives in Xanadu, which is the presidential residence which is three stories high and takes up about one-eighth of the presidential palace.

Mr. White

Mr. White is the American who manages to weasel his way into the inner circle of Bhaskar and the palace. He is convinced that he is an indispensable part of the current Operation but forgets who controls all of the bandwidth going in or out of Kyrgyzstan. Mr. White is the fall guy set up by Datka who faces charges including treason when the sting is finally concluded.



Objects/Places

Royal Terrace Gardens

This is a small pub that sits uphill from the top of Easter Road, close to the Royal Terrace Gardens.

CopSpace

This is the augmented-reality interface to all the intelligent and policing databases that are required to do the job.

HOLMES

This is the policing database for evidence and case management.

BOOTS

This is an acronym for Bayesian Objective Officer Tracking System, it is a policing database for personnel assignments.

VICTOR

This is the policing database for intelligence oversight.

Amir Hotel

This is the place Anwar stays when going for his job interview as honorary consul.

Charlie Hotel Investigation

This is the Culpable Homicide Investigation.

Gruppo Anticrimine Tecnologico

This is a segment of the Guardia di Finanza, which is the national financial, customs and economic police.



Operation Babylon

This is the name given to the investigation of several similar murders in varying jurisdictions and regions.

Turnhouse

This is the airport where Interpol inspector arrives.

Privacy Redaction Order

This is the legal order that can be filed to have DNA taken during an investigation destroyed if no connection to the case it was taken for is found.

Erkindik Hotel

This is the place where Colonel Datka stays largely because they have the best working girls in Bishkek and perhaps even all of Kyrgyzstan. Also the hotel chosen by Dorothy and the site of the arrest of Mr. White who is charged with treason among other charges.

Xanadu

This is a three-story high residence that occupies ten square meters and an eighth of the presidential palace's floor plan. The residence is mounted on shock absorbers that were driven into the bedrock and is sealed from the rest of palace.

The Operation

Headquartered nominally in California, the Operation appears to be an investment partnership with managers who appear to be funding second rate entrepreneurs who don't appear to want to make a profit. Valuing efficiency, the Operation recruits executives, teaching them how to succeed until it is time to cash out.

Issyk-Kulistan

This is a new state, previously part of Kyrgyzstan. It won a vote for independence five months previous and as a result they seceded maintaining official recognition as an independent state. They are a poor country with a capital city smaller than Stirling and an entire population that is approximately the same as Edinburgh. They are unable to afford a legitimate diplomatic corp so instead are willing to hire people who are reliable to man their phones and act as representative.



Themes

Spam vs Advertising

Spam is a form of advertising that evolved as a result of the creation of the internet. It is a virtual free for all that allows anyone anywhere to sell anything and it is a growing force in the every changing technological world. In fact, spam has become the vehicle of choice for criminals world wide. Now they can operate with impunity, hawking their wares or services with little consequence or conflict. Spammers can create virtual offices, and even virtual communities that are untraceable by the average citizen. With the use of net bots, they can send bulk, anonymous emails world wide and the software created to weed out this form of advertising is constantly in a state of catch up. This leap in technology makes regular advertising a thing of the past.

Spam bots are capable of so closely replicating human speech patterns that the filters most people employ on their systems are only able to catch a small portion of the spam sent out. Using more and more sophisticated software, the criminal element is able to come right into any home bombarding its unsuspecting occupants with advertisements for everything from viagra to pornography. It is a far cry from the simplicity and honesty of a billboard advertising on the street corner, or an ad taken out in a local paper or magazine. We no longer depend on customers to come into a store to purchase goods or services, and therefore, the legalities involved in legitimate business

Artificial Intelligence

The creation of an artificial intelligence has been discussed and written about for many years. In the beginning, when movies were made depicting artificial intelligence, it was thought that one day machines would be created that could educate themselves further. Science fiction writers enjoyed both outcome possibilities. In one scenario, computers remained in human control and treated as slaves, and in another, the artificial intelligence soon realized that the largest problem our planet faced was the human beings on it, and the Earth would be better off without us.

The realities associated with AI go much deeper. Once an AI is created, what status would it have? How closely would it mimic us? Would we be able to program it without our flaws and emotions? How would updates be decided and by whom? If an AI chose not to listen, what punishment could be doled out? How would we make the ethical decisions regarding AI and what rights would we allow? Too many issues surround the creation of AI to make it feasible, and in truth, we are a greedy species who believes in domination. What would happen if there was something sharing the planet with us that could rationalize, and was more intelligent than we are? As this has always been our way of justifying our dominance over all other species on the planet, how would we respond to a true AI?



Money Trap

Much like a honey trap, a money trap was created by allowing Issyk-Kulistan to separate from Kyrgyzstan in an effort to lure foreigners into buying CDS's that were then over sold, and over leveraged against the same asset. Meanwhile, the funds that were made by selling the CDS's were used to reduce the country's debt load while at the same time they worked on a reunification program. Issyk-Kulistan then winds up paying for its independence by absorbing the debt load of Kyrgyzstan. The IRIK is set up to declare bankruptcy and the CDS's are being sold to outsiders who fully expect the region to collapse. Those who do so will of course never cash in and in the process by using the whole country as bait. Instead, they manage to create a trap for gangs who intend to use this as a money laundering vehicle.

While not legal, as it is confined to within the country's borders, and the IMF seems content to ignore what is going on. The real risk comes later when cartels who invested realize that they've been fooled and come after the heads of state responsible to retrieve their money.



Style

Point of View

Rule 34 by Charles Stross is written in the second-person narrative, where the author employs the personal pronoun 'you' to the characters when addressing them. This style is not as common a writing style as a first-person narrative or a third-person format. In fact, second-person narratives are often reserved for self-help books or do-it-yourself manuals.

The point of view changes from character to character with each chapter or segment change. The reader thus becomes each character introduced, and is intimately aware of each character's thoughts and feelings. The first character introduced is the main character, Liz, and throughout the story the reader is intimately introduced to both antagonists and protagonists alike. Second-person narratives are not as common as first person or third-person narratives, and lend a unique style to the story. As the story unfolds, the reader is given an intimate look into the motivation of each character and since the author is consistent and reliable in his narration, the story is easy to follow, and the characters understandable and can be related to. Interestingly, the author continues this style even when writing from the perspective of the artificial intelligence character.

Setting

Rule 34 is set primarily in a futuristic Edinburgh, Scotland which is where the story opens. Beginning with a murder, it quickly becomes clear that this is not set in current time when the main character is concerned with transcription software at work and how vocalizing her feelings will affect it. The murder called in is described in only the most general terms as everything becomes part of a permanent record, and rather than describe the condition of the scene, the officer uses code phrasing to let his superior know what to expect.

Though Scotland is where the bulk of this story takes place, there is a brief trip taken by Anwar Hussein as he is flown in an Antonov to Bishkek in the Independent Republic of Issyk-Kulistan. There he is interviewed for the position of consulate representative in Scotland and as the only applicant, is given the job. There is also a brief interlude where Colonel Datka is summoned to the presidential palace in Kyrgyzstan by the First Citizen after he has a troubling night. This section explores the security involved in the presidential palace and specifically Xanadu which is described as approximately one eighth of the palace and is where the First Citizen lives in relative safety and seclusion.

The entire novel is set in just a few locations in both countries and little description is given to any of the locations that are dealt with excepting the description of Xanadu.



The rest of the novel is more given to characterizations and situations as they unfold rather than descriptive passages relating to their locations.

Language and Meaning

Rule 34 is a story that takes place in a futuristic Scotland. Much of the terms and language used to support not only the time period, but the regions as well. The location is well represented by the use of words such as Polis (Police); the People's car (bus); speed pillows (speed bumps); flat (apartment) and cobblestone roads. Children are referred to as bairns and arranging for a vehicle is 'caging a ride' while Dad becomes Da, and didn't become didna. These phrases and expressions lend realism to the region the book is written in, and the time period represented comes with it's own language and phrasing as well descriptive passages.

CopSpace is a term that refers to the conglomerate of police data bases that detectives can access when working a case and there are surveillance drones that monitor behavior. 'Lab on a chip analyzers' do the work that technicians once did and artificial intelligence is alive and well. Nanotechnology is in the forefront of a scheme involving synthetic biochemistry and all of it is being concealed in plain sight, disguised as bread mix from the region of Issyk-Kulistan. The blend of local dialect and futuristic expressions is well done.

Structure

Rule 34 by Charles Stross is a novel of just under 360 pages. It is divided into three parts and then further divided by two interludes. The first part of this novel is 153 pages in length and is separated into twelve subsections. Each subsection is labeled, first by the character that the section focuses on, and then by the main subject matter of that section. For example, Anwar: Job Interview deals with Anwar and his flight to Issyk-Kulistan for a job interview to act as their consul representative in Scotland. Following part one is the first interlude. Just over 15 pages in length, it is divided into three subsections that introduce two characters from out of country, and gives a small amount of background about the Operation and its purpose.

Part two is about 70 pages in length and has 10 subsections which vary in length from just two pages to fifteen pages. The second interlude follows part two, and is 28 pages long and is divided into 3 segments. Each of these provide a background for the character represented. The Toymaker's family life is explained, and Felix and Adam both see the consequences of the events set into motion by the manipulation of a country's finances.

Part three is just under 90 pages and is divided into 12 segments. These segments are shorter in length overall, but each deals with a specific event, review or crisis.



Quotes

"The pen-pushers in Przewalsk want you for a sparkly consular unicorn." (Part 1: Anwar: Job Interview: p. 28).

"Jaxxie: We hope you will take this punishment, which is intended to teach you a valuable lesson, in the spirit in which it is intended." (Part 1: Toymaker: The Leith Police Dismisseth Us: p. 36).

"What is this mysterious job that you need to rent an office for, oh my husband?" (Part 1: Anwar: Office Worker: p. 56).

"I shouldn't really say this, but I hope you double-checked who you were doing business with." (Part 1: Anwar: Diplomat: p. 102).

"I understand you consider my management of a secure hand-off of my departmental responsibilities is less important than what is basically a babysitting job, sir." (Part 1: Liz: Snowballing Hell: p. 129).

"Just remember to stay off line while you run it, and nothing can possibly go wrong." (Part 1: Anwar: Cousin Tariq: p. 136).

"Suppose I ordered you to arrest the American, the investment agent." (Interlude 1: Felix: First Citizen: p. 163).

"The question of whether a machine can think is no more interesting than the question of whether a submarine can swim." (Part Two: Liz: Mote, Eye, Redux: p. 177).

"Somebody shrink-wrapped her to a mattress full of banknotes" (Part 2: Liz: Mote, Eye, Redux: p. 180).

"The sudden hurry, dear boy, is that your employers didn't go out looking to hire honorary consuls at not-inconsiderable cost on a whim; they obviously had a purpose in mind, and with a purpose goes a plan, and with a plan goes a time-table." (Part 2: Anwar: Sleep-walk: p. 235).

"Subjects who exhibit signature behaviors online pointing to potentially violent outbursts

may not provide law enforcement with sufficient evidence to justify an arrest." (Interlude 2: Adam: LOLSpammers: p. 265).

"Choice architecture is the science of designing situations to nudge people towards a desired preference." (Part 3: Liz: It's Complicated: p. 285).

"They're not angel investors so much as fallen angels - please stop looking around like that, you will only attract unwanted attention - and it is important to us that this business man should not be frightened away or prematurely introduced to the police - yes, I said prematurely."

"The question that remains is, did a human being order the software that is conscious to start taking such measures?" (Part Three: Liz: Dominoes Fall, p. 322).

"ATHENA is all about analyzing social networks to reward good behavior and punish defectors." (Part 3: Liz: Debrief: p. 352).

Topics for Discussion

What is Spam? How does it affect the average household? How can it be compared to regular advertising? Which is more effective and why?

How has the internet affected the job being done by police? What are some of the challenges faced by law enforcement personnel as a result of the internet? What steps are being taken to keep ordinary citizens safe from criminal elements? Who is winning the war on crime where the internet is concerned? Why?

What is artificial intelligence? What examples of artificial intelligence can be seen in our lives today? Is AI a positive or negative force overall? Why? How has the concept of artificial intelligence changed since the implementation of computers in our lives? How might AI affect us in the future?

What sting operation is described in this novel? Who sets it up? How is the internet used in this sting? What benefit comes as a result of the sting? Who profits from it? Who was the fall guy? What charges were laid?

What is ATHENA? For what purpose was ATHENA created? Who created ATHENA? Which countries are directly involved in the implementation of ATHENA? In what way does ATHENA veer away from its initial mandate? Why? Who is ATHENA's final victim? What methods does ATHENA use to kill its victims?

What are the main differences in the future of the transportation industry as described in this novel? How does each differ from the systems in place today? Are any of these systems likely in our future? Why or why not?

What is Anwar asked to hand out to anyone who requests it? What is it represented as? What is unusual about it? What are some of the likely applications of this product? What does Anwar do with it? What are the consequences of his actions? How might this be disposed of safely?

What does the Toymaker ask of Anwar? What does he want Anwar to take home with him and why? What effect does this have on Anwar? Why is Bibi so upset? What does the Toymaker reveal to ATHENA regarding the case?

Why does Anwar decide to quit his job? Who calls him about this decision? What request is made of him and why? How does he respond? What promises are made to him? What sensation does Anwar have while talking on the phone? What does he see and what does his caller say that confirms the truth of it?



Why are researchers not interested in replicating or reinventing human consciousness?
What are some of the possible consequences of recreating human consciousness?
What are some of the largest dilemmas?