

### Level 5: Unfit

Scott woke to the familiar beeping sound he knew all too well. Rubbing his eyes blearily, he glanced down at his right forearm to see that his personal health sensor was flashing blue light intermittently, which only meant one thing. It was time for him to take his meds.

He cursed to himself as he dragged himself out of bed. “Better take those pills before Human Health flips,” he muttered.

Downing the medication, he walked over to the small mirror above the dresser in his bedroom to watch the blue flashes of light on the sensor fade as his body returned to optimal health levels. Scott never disregarded the notification system of his sensor, which worked ‘round the clock to monitor his overall health, sending that information to the national Committee of Human Health’s cloud storage of citizen health records, where employees of Human Health would dictate just how often he, along with everyone else in the system, would have to take their personalized medicine. As a rule, he didn’t wait to risk the chance of the Human Health authorities noticing he was neglecting his health, having heard horror stories of people who wait too long to tend to their health sensors. A citizen who was deemed “medically unfit” was required by law to wear and obey the instructions of the health sensor. Those who attempted to breach that law seemed to always, one way or another, get caught and arrested. Once arrested by the Committee of Human Health, they never returned quite the same...

Scott envied those who were perfectly healthy: who could live life without the constant worry of forgetting their meds, without being monitored around the clock by health sensors that sent each and every private detail of their bodies to the Human Health authorities. Health level 1s, what citizens who were strongest and healthiest were called, had everything. They were treated as first-class citizens, a select group of people who were the only ones that were not required by law to wear a health sensor. Without the stigma associated with the health sensors that marked them as medically unfit citizens, those people had a life of limitless potential ahead of them.

Everyone else was out of luck. The rest were assigned levels 2, 3, 4, or 5, like himself, arguably the worst, signifying “mental health defects.” As a young kid, Scott had always dreamed of going to one of those top-tier colleges that only admitted level 1s, he never would have imagined himself where he is today: a high school dropout, living in a ratty apartment building downtown for unfits, barely getting by with his job for the city. Scott supposed it was his fault, really, for having a screwed up brain. His thoughts always seemed to get the worst of him. Come to think of it, he was starting to feel pretty depressed. It was his day off; maybe a change of scenery would help get his mind off things. He got dressed and decided to take a walk until his medication kicked in.

Soon, the familiar comfort of sedation that his medication brought him settled into his consciousness. No matter how much Scott complained it was a relief, to be honest, that he had meds that helped fog his mind and stop the bad feelings. Too much thinking never did him any good.

Ironically, it seemed Scott was too deep in thought to notice a passerby as he made his way down the street. That is, until he collided face-first into someone.

“Watch where you’re going man!”

Scott looked up to see a tall, well-built young man around his age. He lowered his gaze to his forearm to catch a glimpse of his sensor only to notice there was none.

*Oh great*, he thought to himself, *a level 1*.

“Look what we have here, a level 5. Too doped up to realize where you’re headed?” the stranger taunted, as everyone around them burst into laughter. Muttering a quick, “Sorry,” Scott tried sidestepping him to leave, but the man blocked his path.

“I don’t know why we keep all the unfits around,” he continued, “Human Health should just ship them off to an institution where they belong!”

Scott's face reddened in anger, and before he knew it, he violently shoved the stranger away. “I said I was sorry,” he repeated venomously.

Clearly shocked that Scott had the gall to talk back to him, the level 1’s demeanor changed from playful to serious. Straightening up, he approached Scott slowly.

“Oh you’re gonna regret that.”

A punch suddenly struck Scott’s face. He fell over from the hit, and the crowd around them jeered, excited to see a fight. Just as the level 1 poised himself for another blow, a voice rang out, “Hey! What’s going on here?!”

Scott looked up to notice the crowd scattering away quickly as a cop approached the scene. “Oh hello officer,” the level 1 said with a cordial change of tone, “sorry about all this, you know how these unfits can get.”

The officer laughed. “Don’t worry about it. Unfits are always taking their anger out on the rest of us. I don’t know why Human Health bothers with them!” With a friendly pat on the back, the officer sent the level 1 on his way.

“And as for you,” the officer turned to Scott, “consider this a warning. Next time I’ll be sure to call Human Health so they can take you away where you belong. Now get going!” Scott didn’t need to be told twice. He gathered himself up and hurried back to his apartment.

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Once he returned home he slammed the door shut behind him. Scott was mortified, upset, and worst of all, beyond embarrassed about what just transpired.

*I’m such a screw up*, he thought. *Can’t even function like a normal human being for five minutes*. He threw himself on his couch in his misery, mentally berating himself for what had just happened.

As he wallowed in self-pity, he began to feel more and more down. As usual, the sensor in his arm monitoring his body did not fail to take notice. Human Health did not either, as the sensor light on his arm began to flash blue. He would have to take another dose of his pills soon to get his body back to “optimal health.”

Scott took his time in getting up to take his medication. He hated it, he really did: the feeling of constantly being monitored and controlled, never being able to make his own decisions about his body, the fact that any time he had an emotion Human Health deemed too strong he had to swallow pills that took them all away. Whatever it was, be it good or bad, Scott yearned to be able to feel, to be able to think clearly and make his own choices, and to decide on his own what his body needed.

His sensor began beeping. Human Health was getting impatient; he should really take his pills now. He walked over and picked up the small bottle of pills lying on his kitchen table,

contemplating his options. Scott could swallow the pills and forget this whole incident. Slip into the comforting numbness that the meds bring and give in to the fog.

*Or*, a tiny voice in his head told him, *he could not take them*. His heart began to race at the prospect. But how could he possibly escape the ever-present supervision of Human Health? With the sensor in his arm tracking his every move he could not possibly expect his disobedience to go unnoticed.

He paced back and forth as he weighed his options. The desire to just forget it all and down his medication was enticing, but he was angry. His mind flashed back to what had occurred earlier today. Scott was furious, unwilling to just swallow his pride once more and forget today's entire incident. He envisioned himself as happy and healthy, living life without the sensor. It imagined it being as if he were a level 1.

*To hell with them*, he thought. In one rash movement, he ripped the sensor out of his arm. His forearm seared in agony, but the pain brought a feeling of high along with it. Fumbling with excitement, he removed the batteries from the device and watched in amazement as the flashing blue lights on the sensor faded. It was no longer functional. Scott was finally free from the constant watchful eye of Human Health.

He felt invincible. He was no longer morose, but rather, the happiest he had ever been in his life. As he wiped the blood running down his forearm, he felt adrenaline pulsing through his body.

His thoughts, too, were different. The effects of his last dosage of pills had already worn off. There was no longer a fog. No confusion, no lethargy. Scott realized he could think with unequivocal clarity.

*If this was what a life off the pills is like*, he thought excitedly, *then I could get used to this*.

However, the feeling of elation only lasted a few more seconds. He understood with a jolt what this meant. Human Health would immediately get the notification that his sensor was defective, and would soon send authorities over to his place.

It meant that Scott was screwed. Tampering with health sensors was against the law. Once Human Health grasped that Scott willingly and knowingly destroyed his sensor, they would arrest him and take him to the facility for disobedient unfits.

Scott began to break out in a cold sweat. *So that's what it feels like*, he thought cynically, as he deliberated over what he should do.

"I got to get out of here," he said aloud, as he began to panic in earnest. He would have to make a run for it. He stumbled around his apartment in an almost delirious state, his heart racing, trying to think of any belongings he would be able to take with him.

Just then there began a harsh pounding on the door to his apartment.

"Open up!" a gruff male voice shouted. "Human Health! We have received notification of the deactivation of your health sensor. Open the door or we will break and enter!"

There was more harsh pounding as Scott trembled in fear, paralyzed. It was futile to attempt to escape Human Health at this point. The door burst open as two men and a woman stormed in to assess the situation.

"Scott Smith, aged 23 years old, level 5 unfit," the woman read off a clipboard as the two men grabbed a hold of Scott, pinning him in place.

One of the men yanked his arm up and said, "Signs of forced removal of health sensor," while the other man retrieved a syringe from a briefcase.

“Scott Smith,” the woman said, as one of the men stabbed him with the needle and injected him with a liquid, “you are under arrest for the unlawful destruction of your Human Health sensor. You will be taken into custody for further questioning...”

If the woman went on to say anything more, Scott would not have known, for his mind immediately turned cloudy and his vision slowly faded to black.