



# Plugsolia

*Nathaniel Willey*

Apparently, Plugsolia was the hottest plug-parlor in town. That's what Randy had said. The two teenage boys stood outside a metallic building with a neon *Plugsolia* sign flickering overhead. Beyond the double-door entrance, techno music blared like there was no tomorrow.

Walking inside teetered on strolling into a wonderland. The place emitted an all around techno-savvy vibe: monitors hanging on walls displaying computerish scenes, young boys sitting blindly in terminal-chairs with wrists plugged into the internet, every few feet someone staring off into a TV and mashing buttons on a video game. Plugsolia was a way of life, a flavor, a sub-culture where one lived, breathed, and gave homage to the secular techno-gods.

Randy walked over to a small booth consisting of a Rastafarian man, two chairs, a table, and three needle guns, Randy waved, "Over here, Case."

Casey followed and sat in the chair as Randy instructed. The Rastafarian nodded his head rhythmically and gave him a happy-go-lucky stare.

"He wants one wrist plug," Randy directed.

The Rastafarian gave a big nod and lifted a small-sized needle gun from his table, "O-K, yoo know what yoo doin'?"

"Not really," Casey admitted.

"Well—I'm gonna slide this into your wrist and give yoo a plug—then yoo get on the Internet, huh?"

Casey stared at him apprehensively, "I really don't understand."

Randy stepped up to the plate, "Look, man, it's like this—it's 2024, no one uses CPU's anymore. Everything's plugs now, you get a plug into your wrist then just plug-in to a server and your off into the Internet, your brain does all the work of the computer. That's what your brain *is* anyway—a big computer. It's the newest trend—you'll love it!"

"Are you sure it's safe?"

"Of course!" Randy turned to the Rastafarian, "Just do it so he'll stop complaining!"

Giving a salute and placing his gun to Casey's wrist, "O-K."

The needle injected into his wrist, there was no blood, just burning like a bee sting. As the trigger pulled Casey felt a spark shoot through him; zinging up his arm, through his spine, and into his brain. The Rastafarian released the trigger and a small metal ring slid into place on his wrist. The procedure was complete.

"What was that?" Casey asked confusedly.

Randy grabbed his arm, "Come with me, you're one of *us* now."

"What?"

He pulled Casey over to a terminal chair against the wall and sat him down, "Your nerves had to be re-adjusted to accept data flow, that's all that was. Don't worry, it's just a few you don't use anyway." Randy took a thick black wire from the armrest of the chair and inserted it into Casey's wrist, "Here."

"What are you doing?"

Randy gave him a condescending look, "Just watch." He placed his thumb over a small green button on the chair, "Ready?"

"For what?"

As Randy mashed down the button, Casey was involuntarily "pulled" back; all vision receded into his head and left him with a paralyzing blackness. A small cursor began blinking in the top-left corner of his vision. Computer code suddenly flashed, scrolling down his sight in a race of numbers. A few seconds of this, then again, nothing.

Then, like a monitor being turned *on*, a "screen" popped up and program options generated. A message-box appeared welcoming him to *Dataslave*: the command driver for his brain. The program explained to him how plug-in interface worked and walked him through several *getting-started* steps. As soon as all that finished, Casey was left at a desktop screen with a choice of several icons. Casey chose *exit*.

He found himself leaning forward, deeply exhaling. Randy was there bouncing with excitement, "D'you like it?"

Casey nodded.

"Y'did! Just wait till you get on the Internet!"

Casey didn't utter a word.

Randy cocked his head, "Want to get on now?"

His body tingled with anticipation, "Yes!" he spit out.

"No prob!" Randy mashed another button on the chair, sending Casey lunging back into his seat. He watched Casey's face go blank, his eyes falling to narrow slits, a slight smile creeping up his lips.

The Rastafarian walked up to Randy and palmed him a twenty. The two stared down at Casey who quietly sat floating in technological bliss. They almost envied him.

"So," Rastafari asked, "How come yoo never get on anymore?"

Randy snorted, "And get addicted like the rest of these losers. No, I'll just bring em' here as long as you keep paying me. That's as far as I go."

He shrugged, "Alright man. Just askin'. But yoo think this one'll stay?"

Randy smirked, "Course he will. I remember how I couldn't even get myself off the first time I tried. And with a gullible kid like *this*," he nodded, "he'll stay. You've got yourself a lifer with this one."

"Good job man."

Randy looked around the room at the rest of the *plug-ins*, all of them sitting there perfectly unaware of the world. He laughed inside himself as he looked at their thin arms and muscleless necks—all of them yellow from malnutrition and a slight stench of decadence looming over them. They'd spend the rest of their days here, living their lives online, completely oblivious to the outside world. It was a terrible shame, but it was a choice: *their* choice.

"Oh well," he shrugged, "As long as I get paid."

He took one last glance at Casey, still sitting there like a drug addict. He hadn't even been online for two minutes and his face had already glazed over as if he'd been there a lifetime. He'd stay there sitting in that chair for the rest of his life, only leaving once-in-a-while to eat (if that). Randy felt bad about it sometimes—getting these kids hooked like this. But then again, sometimes he didn't; it was their fault for trying it.

He gave himself a whimsical smile, "Doesn't matter. Just so long as I get paid."