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## Introduction

I wrote *Little Brother* in a white-hot fury between May 7, 2007 and July 2, 2007: exactly eight weeks from the day I thought it up to the day I finished it (Alice, to whom this book is dedicated, had to put up with me clacking out the final chapter at 5AM in our hotel in Rome, where we were celebrating our anniversary). I'd always dreamed of having a book just materialize, fully formed, and come pouring out of my fingertips, no sweat and fuss — but it wasn't nearly as much fun as I'd thought it would be. There were days when I wrote 10,000 words, hunching over my keyboard in airports, on subways, in taxis — anywhere I could type. The book was trying to get out of my head, no matter what, and I missed so much sleep and so many meals that friends started to ask if I was unwell.

When my dad was a young university student in the 1960s, he was one of the few "counterculture" people who thought computers were a good thing. For most young people, computers represented the de-humanization of society. University students were reduced to numbers on a punchcard, each bearing the legend "DO NOT BEND, SPINDLE, FOLD OR MUTILATE," prompting some of the students to wear pins that said, "I AM A STUDENT: DO NOT BEND, SPINDLE, FOLD OR MUTILATE ME." Computers were seen as a means to increase the ability of the authorities to regiment people and bend them to their will.

When I was a 17, the world seemed like it was just going to get more free. The Berlin Wall was about to come down. Computers — which had been geeky and weird a few years before — were everywhere, and the modem I'd used to connect to local bulletin board systems was now connecting me to the entire world through the Internet and commercial online services like GENIE. My lifelong fascination with activist causes went into overdrive as I saw how the main difficulty in activism — organizing — was getting easier by leaps and bounds (I still remember the first time I switched from mailing out a newsletter with hand-written addresses to using a database with mail-merge). In the Soviet Union, communications tools were being used to bring information — and revolution — to the farthest-flung corners of the largest authoritarian state the Earth had ever seen.

But 17 years later, things are very different. The computers I love are being co-opted, used to spy on us, control us, snitch on us. The National Security Agency has illegally wiretapped the entire USA and gotten away with it. Car rental companies and mass transit and traffic

authorities are watching where we go, sending us automated tickets, fining us out to busybodies, cops and bad guys who gain illicit access to their databases. The Transport Security Administration maintains a "no-fly" list of people who'd never been convicted of any crime, but who are nevertheless considered too dangerous to fly. The list's contents are secret. The rule that makes it enforceable is secret. The criteria for being added to the list are secret. It has four-year-olds on it. And US senators. And decorated veterans — actual war heroes.

The 17 year olds I know understand to a nicety just how dangerous a computer can be. The authoritarian nightmare of the 1960s has come home for them. The seductive little boxes on their desks and in their pockets watch their every move, corral them in, systematically depriving them of those new freedoms I had enjoyed and made such good use of in my young adulthood.

What's more, kids were clearly being used as guinea-pigs for a new kind of technological state that all of us were on our way to, a world where taking a picture was either piracy (in a movie theater or museum or even a Starbucks), or terrorism (in a public place), but where we could be photographed, tracked and logged hundreds of times a day by every tin-pot dictator, cop, bureaucrat and shop-keeper. A world where any measure, including torture, could be justified just by waving your hands and shouting "Terrorism! 9/11! Terrorism!" until all dissent fell silent.

We don't have to go down that road.

If you love freedom, if you think the human condition is dignified by privacy, by the right to be left alone, by the right to explore your weird ideas provided you don't hurt others, then you have common cause with the kids whose web-browsers and cell phones are being used to lock them up and follow them around.

If you believe that the answer to bad speech is more speech — not censorship — then you have a dog in the fight.

If you believe in a society of laws, a land where our rulers have to tell us the rules, and have to follow them too, then you're part of the same struggle that kids fight when they argue for the right to live under the same Bill of Rights that adults have.

This book is meant to be part of the conversation about what an information society means: does it mean total control, or unheard-of liberty? It's not just a noun, it's a verb, it's something you do.

### **DO SOMETHING**

This book is meant to be something you do, not just something you read. The technology in this book is either real or nearly real. You can

build a lot of it. You can share it and remix it (see THE COPYRIGHT THING, below). You can use the ideas to spark important discussions with your friends and family. You can use those ideas to defeat censorship and get onto the free Internet, even if your government, employer or school doesn't want you to.

Making stuff: The folks at Instructables have put up some killer HOWTOs for building the technology in this book. It's easy and incredibly fun. There's nothing so rewarding in this world as making stuff, especially stuff that makes you more free: <http://www.instructables.com/member/w1n5t0n/>

Discussions: There's an educator's manual for this book that my publisher, Tor, has put together that has tons of ideas for classroom, reading group and home discussions of the ideas in it.

Defeat censorship: The afterword for this book has lots of resources for increasing your online freedom, blocking the snoops and evading the censorware blocks. The more people who know about this stuff, the better.

Your stories: I'm collecting stories of people who've used technology to get the upper hand when confronted with abusive authority. I'm going to be including the best of these in a special afterword to the UK edition (see below) of the book, and I'll be putting them online as well. Send me your stories at [doctorow@craphound.com](mailto:doctorow@craphound.com), with the subject line "Abuses of Authority".

### **GREAT BRITAIN**

I'm a Canadian, and I've lived in lots of places (including San Francisco, the setting for *Little Brother*), and now I live in London, England, with my wife Alice and our little daughter, Poesy. I've lived here (off and on) for five years now, and though I love it to tiny pieces, there's one thing that's always bugged me: my books aren't available here. Some stores carried them as special items, imported from the USA, but it wasn't published by a British publisher.

That's changed! HarperCollins UK has bought the British rights to this book (along with my next young adult novel, *FOR THE WIN*), and they're publishing it just a few months after the US edition, on November 17, 2008 (the day after I get back from my honeymoon!).

I'm so glad about this, I could bust, honestly. Not just because they're finally selling my books in my adopted homeland, but because *I'm raising a daughter here, dammit*, and the surveillance and control mania in this country is starting to scare me bloodless. It seems like the entire police and governance system in Britain has fallen in love with DNA-swabbing,

fingerprinting and video-recording everyone, on the off chance that someday you might do something wrong. In early 2008, the head of Scotland Yard seriously proposed taking DNA from *five-year-olds* who display "offending traits" because they'll probably grow up to be criminals. The next week, the London police put up posters asking us all to turn in people who seem to be taking pictures of the ubiquitous CCTV spy-cameras because anyone who pays too much to the surveillance machine is probably a terrorist.

America isn't the only country that lost its mind this decade. Britain's right there in the nuthouse with it, dribbling down its shirt front and pointing its finger at the invisible bogeymen and screaming until it gets its meds.

We need to be having this conversation all over the planet.

Like I said, the UK edition goes on sale on November 17 (ISBN: 978-0-00-728842-7). There'll even be a limited edition, signed hardcover for people who like their books all artifact-y. If you want to be notified when the book goes on sale, just drop me an email at doctorow@craphound.com with the subject line LITTLE BROTHER UK EDITION.

### **OTHER EDITIONS**

My agent, Russell Galen (and his sub-agent Danny Baror) did an amazing job of pre-selling rights to Little Brother in many languages and formats. Here's the list as of today (May 4, 2008). I'll be updating it as more editions are sold, so feel free to grab another copy of this file (<http://craphound.com/littlebrother/download>) if there's an edition you're hoping to see, or see <http://craphound.com/littlebrother/buy/> for links to buy all the currently shipping editions.

- Audiobook from Random House.

A condition of my deal with Random House is that they're not allowed to release this on services that use "DRM" (Digital Rights Management) systems intended to control use and copying. That means that you won't find this book on Audible or iTunes, because Audible refuses to sell books without DRM (even if the author and publisher don't want DRM), and iTunes only carries Audible audiobooks. However, you can buy the MP3 file direct from RandomHouse or many other fine etailers, or through this link

My foreign rights agent, Danny Baror, has presold a number of foreign editions:

- Greece: Pataki
- Russia: AST Publishing

- France: Universe Poche
- Norway: Det Norske Samlaget

No publication dates yet for these, but I'll keep updating this file as more information is available. You can also subscribe to my mailing list for more info.

### THE COPYRIGHT THING

The Creative Commons license at the top of this file probably tipped you off to the fact that I've got some pretty unorthodox views about copyright. Here's what I think of it, in a nutshell: a little goes a long way, and more than that is too much.

I like the fact that copyright lets me sell rights to my publishers and film studios and so on. It's nice that they can't just take my stuff without permission and get rich on it without cutting me in for a piece of the action. I'm in a pretty good position when it comes to negotiating with these companies: I've got a great agent and a decade's experience with copyright law and licensing (including a stint as a delegate at WIPO, the UN agency that makes the world's copyright treaties). What's more, there's just not that many of these negotiations — even if I sell fifty or a hundred different editions of *Little Brother* (which would put it in top millionth of a percentile for fiction), that's still only a hundred negotiations, which I could just about manage.

I *hate* the fact that fans who want to do what readers have always done are expected to play in the same system as all these hotshot agents and lawyers. It's just *stupid* to say that an elementary school classroom should have to talk to a lawyer at a giant global publisher before they put on a play based on one of my books. It's ridiculous to say that people who want to "loan" their electronic copy of my book to a friend need to get a *license* to do so. Loaning books has been around longer than any publisher on Earth, and it's a fine thing.

I recently saw Neil Gaiman give a talk at which someone asked him how he felt about piracy of his books. He said, "Hands up in the audience if you discovered your favorite writer for free — because someone loaned you a copy, or because someone gave it to you? Now, hands up if you found your favorite writer by walking into a store and plunking down cash." Overwhelmingly, the audience said that they'd discovered their favorite writers for free, on a loan or as a gift. When it comes to my favorite writers, there's no boundaries: I'll buy every book they publish, just to own it (sometimes I buy two or three, to give away to friends who *must* read those books). I pay to see them live. I buy t-shirts with their book-covers on them. I'm a customer for life.

Neil went on to say that he was part of the tribe of readers, the tiny minority of people in the world who read for pleasure, buying books because they love them. One thing he knows about everyone who downloads his books on the Internet without permission is that they're *readers*, they're people who love books.

People who study the habits of music-buyers have discovered something curious: the biggest pirates are also the biggest spenders. If you pirate music all night long, chances are you're one of the few people left who also goes to the record store (remember those?) during the day. You probably go to concerts on the weekend, and you probably check music out of the library too. If you're a member of the red-hot music-fan tribe, you do lots of *everything* that has to do with music, from singing in the shower to paying for black-market vinyl bootlegs of rare Eastern European covers of your favorite death-metal band.

Same with books. I've worked in new bookstores, used bookstores and libraries. I've hung out in pirate ebook ("bookwarez") places online. I'm a stone used bookstore junkie, and I go to book fairs for fun. And you know what? It's the same people at all those places: book fans who do lots of everything that has to do with books. I buy weird, fugly pirate editions of my favorite books in China because they're weird and fugly and look great next to the eight or nine other editions that I paid full-freight for of the same books. I check books out of the library, google them when I need a quote, carry dozens around on my phone and hundreds on my laptop, and have (at this writing) more than 10,000 of them in storage lockers in London, Los Angeles and Toronto.

If I could loan out my physical books without giving up possession of them, I *would*. The fact that I can do so with digital files is not a bug, it's a feature, and a damned fine one. It's embarrassing to see all these writers and musicians and artists bemoaning the fact that art just got this wicked new feature: the ability to be shared without losing access to it in the first place. It's like watching restaurant owners crying down their shirts about the new free lunch machine that's feeding the world's starving people because it'll force them to reconsider their business-models. Yes, that's gonna be tricky, but let's not lose sight of the main attraction: free lunches!

Universal access to human knowledge is in our grasp, for the first time in the history of the world. This is not a bad thing.

In case that's not enough for you, here's my pitch on why giving away ebooks makes sense at this time and place:

Giving away ebooks gives me artistic, moral and commercial satisfaction. The commercial question is the one that comes up most often: how can you give away free ebooks and still make money?

For me — for pretty much every writer — the big problem isn't piracy, it's obscurity (thanks to Tim O'Reilly for this great aphorism). Of all the people who failed to buy this book today, the majority did so because they never heard of it, not because someone gave them a free copy. Mega-hit best-sellers in science fiction sell half a million copies — in a world where 175,000 attend the San Diego Comic Con alone, you've got to figure that most of the people who "like science fiction" (and related geeky stuff like comics, games, Linux, and so on) just don't really buy books. I'm more interested in getting more of that wider audience into the tent than making sure that everyone who's in the tent bought a ticket to be there.

Ebooks are verbs, not nouns. You copy them, it's in their nature. And many of those copies have a destination, a person they're intended for, a hand-wrought transfer from one person to another, embodying a personal recommendation between two people who trust each other enough to share bits. That's the kind of thing that authors (should) dream of, the proverbial sealing of the deal. By making my books available for free pass-along, I make it easy for people who love them to help other people love them.

What's more, I don't see ebooks as substitute for paper books for most people. It's not that the screens aren't good enough, either: if you're anything like me, you already spend every hour you can get in front of the screen, reading text. But the more computer-literate you are, the less likely you are to be reading long-form works on those screens — that's because computer-literate people do more things with their computers. We run IM and email and we use the browser in a million diverse ways. We have games running in the background, and endless opportunities to tinker with our music libraries. The more you do with your computer, the more likely it is that you'll be interrupted after five to seven minutes to do something else. That makes the computer extremely poorly suited to reading long-form works off of, unless you have the iron self-discipline of a monk.

The good news (for writers) is that this means that ebooks on computers are more likely to be an enticement to buy the printed book (which is, after all, cheap, easily had, and easy to use) than a substitute for it. You can probably read just enough of the book off the screen to realize you want to be reading it on paper.



So ebooks sell print books. Every writer I've heard of who's tried giving away ebooks to promote paper books has come back to do it again. That's the commercial case for doing free ebooks.

Now, onto the artistic case. It's the twenty-first century. Copying stuff is never, ever going to get any harder than it is today (or if it does, it'll be because civilization has collapsed, at which point we'll have other problems). Hard drives aren't going to get bulkier, more expensive, or less capacious. Networks won't get slower or harder to access. If you're not making art with the intention of having it copied, you're not really making art for the twenty-first century. There's something charming about making work you don't want to be copied, in the same way that it's nice to go to a Pioneer Village and see the olde-timey blacksmith shoeing a horse at his traditional forge. But it's hardly, you know, *contemporary*. I'm a science fiction writer. It's my job to write about the future (on a good day) or at least the present. Art that's not supposed to be copied is from the past.

Finally, let's look at the moral case. Copying stuff is natural. It's how we learn (copying our parents and the people around us). My first story, written when I was six, was an excited re-telling of Star Wars, which I'd just seen in the theater. Now that the Internet — the world's most efficient copying machine — is pretty much everywhere, our copying instinct is just going to play out more and more. There's no way I can stop my readers, and if I tried, I'd be a hypocrite: when I was 17, I was making mix-tapes, photocopying stories, and generally copying in every way I could imagine. If the Internet had been around then, I'd have been using it to copy as much as I possibly could.

There's no way to stop it, and the people who try end up doing more harm than piracy ever did. The record industry's ridiculous holy war against file-sharers (more than 20,000 music fans sued and counting!) exemplifies the absurdity of trying to get the food-coloring out of the swimming pool. If the choice is between allowing copying or being a frothing bully lashing out at anything he can reach, I choose the former.

#### **DONATIONS AND A WORD TO TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS**

Every time I put a book online for free, I get emails from readers who want to send me donations for the book. I appreciate their generous spirit, but I'm not interested in cash donations, because my publishers are really important to me. They contribute immeasurably to the book, improving it, introducing it to audience I could never reach, helping me do more with my work. I have no desire to cut them out of the loop.

But there has to be some good way to turn that generosity to good use, and I think I've found it.

Here's the deal: there are lots of teachers and librarians who'd love to get hard-copies of this book into their kids' hands, but don't have the budget for it (teachers in the US spend around \$1,200 out of pocket each on classroom supplies that their budgets won't stretch to cover, which is why I sponsor a classroom at Ivanhoe Elementary in my old neighborhood in Los Angeles; you can adopt a class yourself [freelittlebrother@gmail.com](mailto:freelittlebrother@gmail.com) with your name and the name and address of your school. It'll be posted to my site by my fantastic helper, Olga Nunes, so that potential donors can see it.

If you enjoyed the electronic edition of *Little Brother* and you want to donate something to say thanks, go here and find a teacher or librarian you want to support. Then go to Amazon, BN.com, or your favorite electronic bookseller and order a copy to the classroom, then email a copy of the receipt (feel free to delete your address and other personal info first!) to [freelittlebrother@gmail.com](mailto:freelittlebrother@gmail.com) so that Olga can mark that copy as sent. If you don't want to be publicly acknowledged for your generosity, let us know and we'll keep you anonymous, otherwise we'll thank you on the donate page.

I have no idea if this will end up with hundreds, dozens or just a few copies going out — but I have high hopes!

## **Dedication**

For Alice, who makes me whole

## Quotes

*A rousing tale of techno-geek rebellion, as necessary and dangerous as file sharing, free speech, and bottled water on a plane.*

- Scott Westerfeld, author of UGLIES and EXTRAS

*I can talk about Little Brother in terms of its bravura political speculation or its brilliant uses of technology — each of which make this book a must-read — but, at the end of it all, I'm haunted by the universality of Marcus's rite-of-passage and struggle, an experience any teen today is going to grasp: the moment when you choose what your life will mean and how to achieve it.*

- Steven C Gould, author of JUMPER and REFLEX

*I'd recommend Little Brother over pretty much any book I've read this year, and I'd want to get it into the hands of as many smart 13 year olds, male and female, as I can.*

*Because I think it'll change lives. Because some kids, maybe just a few, won't be the same after they've read it. Maybe they'll change politically, maybe technologically. Maybe it'll just be the first book they loved or that spoke to their inner geek. Maybe they'll want to argue about it and disagree with it. Maybe they'll want to open their computer and see what's in there. I don't know. It made me want to be 13 again right now and reading it for the first time, and then go out and make the world better or stranger or odder. It's a wonderful, important book, in a way that renders its flaws pretty much meaningless.*

- Neil Gaiman, author of ANASI BOYS

*Little Brother is a scarily realistic adventure about how homeland security technology could be abused to wrongfully imprison innocent Americans. A teenage hacker-turned-hero pits himself against the government to fight for his basic freedoms. This book is action-packed with tales of courage, technology, and demonstrations of digital disobedience as the technophile's civil protest."*

- Bunnie Huang, author of HACKING THE XBOX

*Cory Doctorow is a fast and furious storyteller who gets all the details of alternate reality gaming right, while offering a startling, new vision of how these games might play out in the high-stakes context of a terrorist attack. Little Brother is a brilliant novel with a bold argument: hackers and gamers might just be our country's best hope for the future.*

- Jane McGonical, Designer, I Love Bees

*The right book at the right time from the right author — and, not entirely coincidentally, Cory Doctorow's best novel yet.*

- John Scalzi, author of OLD MAN'S WAR

*It's about growing up in the near future where things have kept going on the way they've been going, and it's about hacking as a habit of mind, but mostly it's about growing up and changing and looking at the world and asking what you can do about that. The teenage voice is pitch-perfect. I couldn't put it down, and I loved it.*

- Jo Walton, author of FARTHING

*A worthy younger sibling to Orwell's 1984, Cory Doctorow's LITTLE BROTHER is lively, precocious, and most importantly, a little scary.*

- Brian K Vaughn, author of Y: THE LAST MAN

*"Little Brother" sounds an optimistic warning. It extrapolates from current events to remind us of the ever-growing threats to liberty. But it also notes that liberty ultimately resides in our individual attitudes and actions. In our increasingly authoritarian world, I especially hope that teenagers and young adults will read it — and then persuade their peers, parents and teachers to follow suit.*

- Dan Gillmor, author of WE, THE MEDIA

## **About the bookstore dedications**

Every chapter of this file has been dedicated to a different bookstore, and in each case, it's a store that I love, a store that's helped me discover books that opened my mind, a store that's helped my career along. The stores didn't pay me anything for this — I haven't even told them about it — but it seems like the right thing to do. After all, I'm hoping that you'll read this ebook and decide to buy the paper book, so it only makes sense to suggest a few places you can pick it up!

# Chapter 1

*This chapter is dedicated to BakkaPhoenix Books in Toronto, Canada. Bakka is the oldest science fiction bookstore in the world, and it made me the mutant I am today. I wandered in for the first time around the age of 10 and asked for some recommendations. Tanya Huff (yes, the Tanya Huff, but she wasn't a famous writer back then!) took me back into the used section and pressed a copy of H. Beam Piper's "Little Fuzzy" into my hands, and changed my life forever. By the time I was 18, I was working at Bakka — I took over from Tanya when she retired to write full time — and I learned life-long lessons about how and why people buy books. I think every writer should work at a bookstore (and plenty of writers have worked at Bakka over the years! For the 30th anniversary of the store, they put together an anthology of stories by Bakka writers than included work by Michelle Sagara (AKA Michelle West), Tanya Huff, Nalo Hopkinson, Tara Tallan —and me!)  
BakkaPhoenix Books: 697 Queen Street West, Toronto ON Canada  
M6J1E6, +1 416 963 9993*

I'm a senior at Cesar Chavez high in San Francisco's sunny Mission district, and that makes me one of the most surveilled people in the world. My name is Marcus Yallow, but back when this story starts, I was going by w1n5t0n. Pronounced "Winston."

*Not* pronounced "Double-you-one-enn-five-tee-zero-enn" — unless you're a clueless disciplinary officer who's far enough behind the curve that you still call the Internet "the information superhighway."

I know just such a clueless person, and his name is Fred Benson, one of three vice-principals at Cesar Chavez. He's a sucking chest wound of a human being. But if you're going to have a jailer, better a clueless one than one who's really on the ball.

"Marcus Yallow," he said over the PA one Friday morning. The PA isn't very good to begin with, and when you combine that with Benson's habitual mumble, you get something that sounds more like someone

struggling to digest a bad burrito than a school announcement. But human beings are good at picking their names out of audio confusion — it's a survival trait.

I grabbed my bag and folded my laptop three-quarters shut — I didn't want to blow my downloads — and got ready for the inevitable.

"Report to the administration office immediately."

My social studies teacher, Ms Galvez, rolled her eyes at me and I rolled my eyes back at her. The Man was always coming down on me, just because I go through school firewalls like wet kleenex, spoof the gait-recognition software, and nuke the snitch chips they track us with. Galvez is a good type, anyway, never holds that against me (especially when I'm helping get with her webmail so she can talk to her brother who's stationed in Iraq).

My boy Darryl gave me a smack on the ass as I walked past. I've known Darryl since we were still in diapers and escaping from play-school, and I've been getting him into and out of trouble the whole time. I raised my arms over my head like a prizefighter and made my exit from Social Studies and began the perp-walk to the office.

I was halfway there when my phone went. That was another no-no — phones are muy prohibido at Chavez High — but why should that stop me? I ducked into the toilet and shut myself in the middle stall (the furthest stall is always grossest because so many people head straight for it, hoping to escape the smell and the squick — the smart money and good hygiene is down the middle). I checked the phone — my home PC had sent it an email to tell it that there was something new up on Harajuku Fun Madness, which happens to be the best game ever invented.

I grinned. Spending Fridays at school was teh suck anyway, and I was glad of the excuse to make my escape.

I ambled the rest of the way to Benson's office and tossed him a wave as I sailed through the door.

"If it isn't Double-you-one-enn-five-tee-zero-enn," he said. Fredrick Benson — Social Security number 545-03-2343, date of birth August 15 1962, mother's maiden name Di Bona, hometown Petaluma — is a lot taller than me. I'm a runty 5'8", while he stands 6'7", and his college basketball days are far enough behind him that his chest muscles have turned into saggy man-boobs that were painfully obvious through his freebie dot-com polo-shirts. He always looks like he's about to slam-dunk your ass, and he's really into raising his voice for dramatic effect. Both these start to lose their efficacy with repeated application.

"Sorry, nope," I said. "I never heard of this R2D2 character of yours."



"W1n5t0n," he said, spelling it out again. He gave me a hairy eyeball and waited for me to wilt. Of course it was my handle, and had been for years. It was the identity I used when I was posting on message-boards where I was making my contributions to the field of applied security research. You know, like sneaking out of school and disabling the minder-tracer on my phone. But he didn't know that this was my handle. Only a small number of people did, and I trusted them all to the end of the earth.

"Um, not ringing any bells," I said. I'd done some pretty cool stuff around school using that handle — I was very proud of my work on snitch-tag killers — and if he could link the two identities, I'd be in trouble. No one at school ever called me w1n5t0n or even Winston. Not even my pals. It was Marcus or nothing.

Benson settled down behind his desk and tapped his class-ring nervously on his blotter. He did this whenever things started to go bad for him. Poker players call stuff like this a "tell" — something that let you know what was going on in the other guy's head. I knew Benson's tells backwards and forwards.

"Marcus, I hope you realize how serious this is."

"I will just as soon as you explain what this is, sir." I always say "sir" to authority figures when I'm messing with them. It's my own tell.

He shook his head at me and looked down, another tell. Any second now, he was going to start shouting at me. "Listen, kiddo! It's time you came to grips with the fact that we know about what you've been doing, and that we're not going to be lenient about it. You're going to be lucky if you're not expelled before this meeting is through. Do you want to graduate?"

"Mr Benson, you still haven't explained what the problem is —"

He slammed his hand down on the desk and then pointed his finger at me. "The *problem*, Mr Yallow, is that you've been engaged in criminal conspiracy to subvert this school's security system, and you have supplied security countermeasures to your fellow students. You know that we expelled Graciella Uriarte last week for using one of your devices." Uriarte had gotten a bad rap. She'd bought a radio-jammer from a head-shop near the 16th Street BART station and it had set off the countermeasures in the school hallway. Not my doing, but I felt for her.

"And you think I'm involved in that?"

"We have reliable intelligence indicating that you are w1n5t0n" — again, he spelled it out, and I began to wonder if he hadn't figured out that the 1 was an I and the 5 was an S. "We know that this w1n5t0n

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