

“Do you consent to my dream?”

“What’s the dream about?”

“Something you never have experienced before.”

Jens Richard

DREAM LIGHT CITY

Part 1

John's story

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Another dead young girl

I'm on my way to a crime scene of another dead young teen.
Another broken dream.
My deputies are already there to start our show.
They must have planted the evidence by now.
I don't care about evidence anymore. I want to close the case and move on.
This is just another girl in the gutter in Mr. Bix's territory.
I show up as the good guy the citizens believe I am.
The one to solve the puzzle.
I play my part to keep the city in order, and I will find someone to blame for her death.
It should be easy because everyone here carries the biotech from Mr. Bix.
The biotech drug that accesses your consciousness and memories.
I sit next to the body.
Poor thing, such a beauty.
I see no signs of struggle. This was not a fight.
Could there be something wrong with her biotech implants?
Who is she?
She's not one of Mr. Bix's.
My deputies have not planted anything. What game is this?
The ambulance is here. I better check her ID chip on her neck.
Something's wrong?
She has none.
One of my deputies interrupts me.
"We have already checked her chip and notified her parents."
I'm about to ask too many questions now.
Questions about how they could scan her when she has none?
But they quickly repeat themselves.
"The chip is scanned, sir!"
Okay, I get it.
We keep it in the dark.
Keep everything in the dream.
The show must go on, and I need to find someone to take the blame.
I point out a drugged punk in the crowd, a young man with too many piercings.
He tries to say something in defense as one of my deputies takes his pad up,
pretending to write notes, but in reality, he connects to the punk's biotech.

That's my clue.

"You," I lie, "You were her boyfriend. I saw you together last night."

I stand up tall.

I know how to play Alpha.

The crowd is quiet now. Everyone is holding their breath.

The punk suddenly says he gave her some bad drugs, and she must have died from an overdose.

He gives me some pills, and my deputies cuff him as he confesses every lie we give him.

I put the pills in a container and hand it to the people in the ambulance, together with a private credit chip with 1000 credits.

They will make sure the autopsy matches the statement.

Case closed.

Clear the street.

The show's over.

Welcome to Dream Light City.

The streets

Dream Light City.

What a nightmare.

"Sigh."

I want to go home. I miss my family.

They are the only reason I live. They are my dream.

But I have been summoned.

I walk down the streets. I used to love these streets and the possibilities they had.

This town was once an utopia, but the Mayor changed everything, and he is making sure I'm following his new vision.

I wonder what he wants from me this time.

Hold on!

The streets suddenly go quiet.

It's like the calm before the storm.

A scream!

My instincts kick in, and I forget all about my depression.

My pulse rises.

I need to help whoever made that scream.

This is who I am, my true self. I'm a protector. This is why I became the Sheriff.

A young man comes out of an alley, he is beaten up, and his clothes are torn apart.

His left arm seems broken, and he is bleeding from his chin, it looks like a knife cut.

The poor dude stumbles and hides behind a garbage can in fear.

I close my eyes.

I listen.

I hear them.

I open my eyes and activate the Powerblade on my back.

Three men come out of the alley.

I'm not the one who shoots first and asks questions later. I will give them a fair chance.

They see me now.

Their laughter stops, they should run, but they are high on adrenaline and want to fight.

The young man is still hiding.

He's locked in fear.

I show my badge to the men, but they seem not to care.

"This is a personal dream, Sheriff," one of them says. "We all agreed to this game."

I look at the poor young man.

Damn this city. Damn this law of dreams.

I ask the boy if this is true and if he really agreed and consented to this dream of being beaten by three stronger men.

"I did," he stutters, "they pay me 10 credits when the game is over."

What a sick dream.

That poor fella is so desperate that he will be paid so little to be beaten like that.

One of the attackers draws my attention. "Scan us, Sheriff. We are locked in a dream."

I take up my pad and I scan them. I see what they see. It's a game, yes.

They play an Alternative Reality game, Goblin Hunters, where the boy is a goblin, and they are the hunters.

I hate this Alternative Reality, no one knows what's real anymore, and you don't need contact lenses or eyeglasses to see it anymore. Some even have fancy nanobots injected into their biotech to connect to the dream world. I'm fine with scanning with my pad when I need to see it.

"What's the holdup, Sheriff?"

I ignore them and look at the game stats.

In the game, the goblin is not as beaten as the boy. The game is out of sync, and I need to stop it.

I walk to the men.

"This game is over!" I claim. "It's out of sync, and the goblin is already defeated."

I turn to the boy and keep too much focus on him as one of the men jumps at me.

I take a hit, a fist to my face.

Am I getting old?

How could I be so irresponsible?

"Ha ha ha, I just punched the legendary Sheriff!"

The goblin boy starts running.

The two other men chase him. "Get that goblin," they scream.

I draw my Raygun from under my trenchcoat and shout, "STOP!"

My attacker next to me takes the advantage and draws a knife.

"To hell with you, Sheriff."

I draw my Powerblade in anger and cut off the man's head in one clean move.

I quickly return my focus to the fleeing goblin and shoot the man closest to him.

The last man recognizes the shot and tosses himself hard to the ground.

"I SURRENDER!"

My Raygun is a fearsome weapon. It is locked to my DNA with an inbuilt AI. It feels my intentions, and it knows where to hit. Even though I don't need it, my manual aim is good enough as it is.

I ping my office. They will come and clean up this mess.

I cuff the surviving attacker to a light pole as he glances at my Raygun with fear.

The goblin is gone but survived. Good.

I look back at the headless man. That was insane.

It was overkill on my end.
This is not how I should play my role.
My depression drags me back to sadness.
I'm late for my appointment with the Mayor.
He has summoned me.