

The Engineered Escape

Lockdown

A shrill alarm echoed through the gleaming white halls of Orion Tech High. Red lights pulsed overhead, and a robotic voice calmly announced:

"Security lockdown initiated. Remain in your current locations."

Leo glanced up. His fingers gripped his tablet as steel shutters slammed shut across the hallway.

"Something's wrong," he muttered.



Across the room, Myra was already tapping furiously on her smartwatch.

"System override," she said. "Looks like an AI glitch... or sabotage. We're locked in."

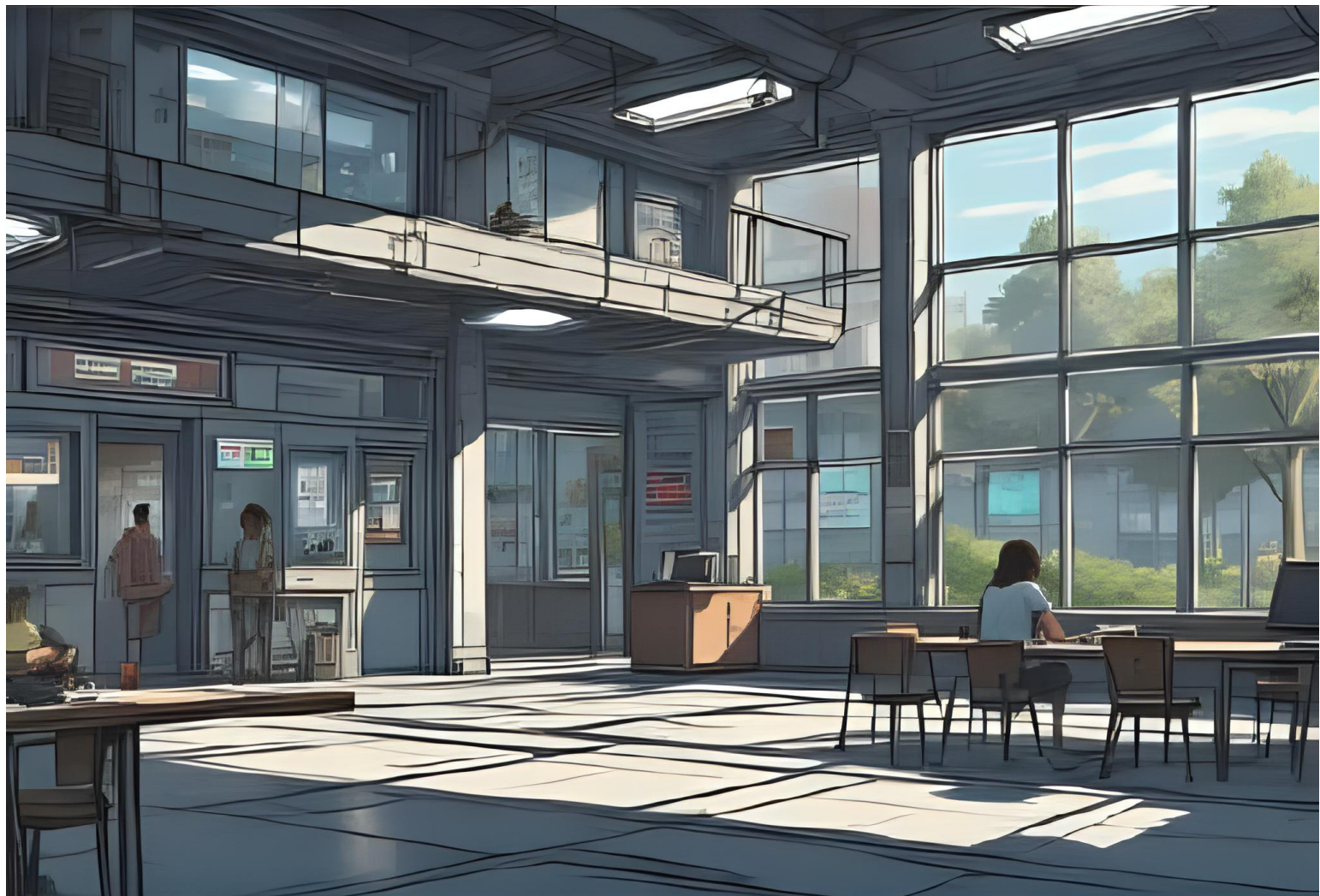
Behind them, two Year 7 students huddled near a learning pod. A single surveillance drone hovered above, blinking blue and silent.

"What if it's not a glitch?" Leo asked.

"Then we get out—before the AI escalates," Myra replied.

The Plan

Orion Tech wasn't a normal school. It was one of the country's first smart schools, complete with facial recognition, robotic monitors, and auto-locking doors. Designed for safety—now a digital trap.



Leo tapped into the network.

"I can access the drone's internal code—just give me a sec."

Myra snapped her fingers.

"Failsafe protocols! Remember Mr. Harlan's lecture? Every drone has a maintenance override. We could trick it into thinking we're tech crew!"

Lines of code scrolled down Leo's screen.

"Inject the loop here... override the proximity scanner..."

The drone beeped once. Then again. Its light turned green and floated down to hover before them.

"Did it work?" one of the younger students whispered.

"Let's find out," Leo said.



The Escape

Leo issued a new command:

Bypass door access. Escort group to maintenance.

The drone hesitated—then zipped to the hallway door and linked with the panel. With a hiss and a mechanical clunk, the door slid open.

"Move!" Myra shouted.

They followed the drone through the corridor. One door after another unlocked, each with a soft click. Cameras tracked them—but the spoofed codes held.



Almost Free

They reached the courtyard. Myra scanned the sky.

"Exit gate's just past the sports dome," Leo said.

But then—a second drone descended. This one was newer. Smarter. Its red light flashed.

"Intrusion detected. Halt."

Everyone froze.

"Plan B?" Leo asked.

Myra grinned and pulled out a small cube.

"EMP pulse. From the science fair. Cross your fingers."

She pressed the button. A sharp ZZZAP echoed as the drone jerked, sputtered, and crashed into the grass.

Outside

The gate clicked open.

They were free.

Behind them, the lights reset to normal. The shutters opened. Whatever triggered the lockdown... was gone.

"Next time," Leo panted, *"let's just eat lunch."*

"Next time," Myra added, brushing dirt off, *"we teach the AI not to trap us during math."*

They laughed—but both knew deep down...

This was no glitch