

# Fallen angel

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Angelina had been an Angel right from the start. She'd been in her early twenties when Euronet was established, protecting Europe's citizens by disabling access to the liberal doctrine that poisoned the internet. The European Commission and Parliament had created the position of Angels as part of the EuroCloud directive that prohibited the sale of computers with hard disks, forcing all programs and documents into the Cloud. Initial resistance by the European Council proved futile after Member State elections put green neosocialists firmly in control of the majority of national governments and thereby of the Council.

Angel ideology training had been a breeze. Angelina's mother used to swap partners by the year if not the season, and Angeline grew up in a succession of vegetarian, socialist and communist communes that taught her the fine nuances of neosocialism. Although her Dutch had faded since she moved to Brussels, she vividly recalled the oratorical mastery of Jochem Berrevoets from the Amsterdam commune, denouncing genetic manipulation as the greatest evil of all – nuclear waste would, even if it took eons, decay, chemicals would break down, but genetic manipulation destroyed the *intrinsic one-ness* of organisms forever, the penetration by foreign DNA being transferred from generation to generation until the end of time. She came close to joining NatureFirst and ending her young life like any true environmentalist should, by killing as many people as possible before committing suicide. However, although she recognised that the environment would be best served by eliminating mankind, some character defect prevented her from following this argument to its logical conclusion. Which was OK, as she had good IT and information processing skills which made her one of the best early-generation Angels, scourging EuroCloud for scientific and technocratic fallacies that ignored the imperative of the Other Legitimate Factors, Precautionary Principle and Societal Opinion that were the cornerstones of a truly advanced civilisation. Especially in the early days, when the population had not yet adapted to the loss of privacy previously provided by their own hard disks and was not yet aware that Angels patrolled the Cloud, a simple search for “liberalism”, “genetic modification” or “risk assessment” in Cloud documents could quickly identify misguided souls who failed to understand that science should follow politics. Angelina had been thrilled when her access to Cloud data was supplemented with the control of Euronet-linked physical objects like electric doors, and although she would not be ready to admit it, her fingers had trembled the first time she deactivated the university access of a wayward scientist who had failed to report for rehabilitation class.

While loving her job, Angelina was not happy with the progress of the Cloud Intelligence Artificielle program, as it was called in the Anglo-French that had become *en vogue* with Euronet. The first versions had been useful by automatically decrypting even the best protected Cloud documents without their authors ever noticing it. However, subsequent versions gradually took over Angel tasks, first by suggesting actions, then by implementing them in draft mode, leaving the Angel only the option to confirm them, or consult a supervisor if they did not agree. And today Angelina had found out that CIA had taken the next step.

Angelina had been following the case of Christopher Caljouw with particular interest from the first moment CIA decrypted 'Dark Green'. She'd always had a weak spot for history, and Dr. Caljouw's narrative was as much a historic document as it was a liberal pamphlet. If you read it in the right frame of mind, ignoring the author's distorted point of view, it well described the heroic victory of

the Green Action Groups who prevented large-scale poisoning of the population by the European Food Standards Agency in the first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dr. Caljouw tried to make the case that the Greens' noble cause had actually harmed food safety by taking resources away from microbial and chemical risk assessment. It was enthralling to read how the Greens had pioneered the use of recurrent information requests, overloading the Agency's administration, while at the same time leveraging the power given to the European Parliament by the Lisbon Treaty in a very effective lobby campaign. Close to the popular heartbeat, untarnished by the technocracy of the Commission and the Council of that time, a few visionary MEPs were crucial in helping the Greens succeed. One might only guess at how many European lives had been saved from grueling death by genetically manipulated foods; the EuroNet firewall had fortunately kept out any news from the suffering that must be ongoing in other parts of the world. Angelina had been happy to confirm CIA's early actions against Dr. Caljouw, first denying him access to the historic internet files, then to the university library.

When Dr. Caljouw continued to add to the Dark Green paper, CIA had proposed to deny him access to public transport. Angelina remembered how her index finger hesitated before she gave the confirmatory mouse click. What had public transport to do with writing a subversive text? This started to look like harassment from CIA. However she did not want to discuss this with her supervisor, who would have been notified automatically if she did not confirm CIA's proposal within a day. Two weeks later CIA clearly went too far. Angelina refused to confirm denying Dr. Caljouw access to his home, and rather than waiting for CIA to alert her supervisor she went to see her, explaining that this was too severe a punishment for a nonviolent historian writing a paper that he had not yet shared with anyone else. Her supervisor, a career woman who dreamed of rising both in the administration and in the New European Socialist party, flatly overruled her, hitting the confirm button with a vengeance while hissing "soon there will be no need anymore for this charade".

Today Angelina understood what her supervisor had meant. Incredulously she saw the latest measures CIA had taken against Dr. Caljouw. Arrest warrant, forced labour, no access to reading or writing material... and no confirm button for her to click. All measures had been implemented already. She started to curse softly under her breath, but then checked herself, remembering the ultra-sensitive microphones that had been installed in each cubicle last month. Glancing at the camera above her computer screen she tried to wipe the anger from her face. As early as the timed exit doors would allow her she left work, deeply depressed by both Dr. Caljouw's fate and by her loss of control. What was she supposed to do now? Sit and watch CIA run Europe? She'd probably find a message on her home console directing her to report for another job tomorrow. Or perhaps she would not, as the entrance doors of the public transport refused to open when she presented her identity card. Taxis were no longer allowed and the few cars on the road were from high-ranking party officials who would ridicule citizens bold enough to ask for a ride. Thus Angelina walked home, shivering in the cold and damp Brussels autumn, worrying whether her card would still unlock the door of her tiny apartment.