

BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE. Consumers. Men, women, children. Many carry shopping bags emblazoned with a gold leaf letter "U". They bustle through a glittering mall. Immaculate. Every surface shining. Every store filled with the bounty of a world more evolved than our own. Into this glittering place only one thing seems out of place:

A MAN. He is making every attempt to blend in. But something is indelibly 'different' about him. Perhaps it is that his pant legs are cuffed unevenly. Or that his tie is skewed. Or that his teeth are less than pearly white. Or that the lines of perspiration that run down his forehead give his pale complexion an objectionable sheen.

His uneven gait and gangly physique draw wary glances from passersby. And for all his attempts to be just another anonymous member of the crowd, his discomfort is painfully obvious to those around him. Indeed, harder he tries to blend in, the more he seems to draw attention to himself.

Finally, in an ill-fated attempt to duck down a less populated avenue, he stumbles into a garbage can. He tumbles to the spotless floor accompanied by an avalanche of trash and an obscenely loud CRASH.

Anyone in his immediate proximity turns. A ring of perfect faces gaze down at him with the kind of shocked fascination that often accompanies a car accident. The man is bald. His hairpiece lies on the ground amongst the trash. His exposed pate catches the gleaming lights of this Elysian dream world. Compared to these shimmering beings he is a grotesque. A mutant.

Quickly, phones are withdrawn from pockets. A number dialed. The man looks to the others searching for some modicum of pity. He finds none. The crowd merely parts to allow an autonomous DRONE access. Its carapace is sleek-black and decorated with the symbols of authority.

The man rises slowly, terror growing. Understanding that there is no escape. And yet, impulsively, irrationally, he turns to run. Before he can take a step, the drone fires an electrical wire into his spine, instantly stunning him. He lands on the ground in a twitching dance that ends with total paralysis.

The drone wraps him in a sarcophagus of clear plastic, then ingests him like a portable incinerator, superheating his body until nothing is left but a plume of gas which is scented and then dispersed into the atmosphere.

A manned CLEAN-UP CREW whisks away the spilled trash restoring the mall to its pristine state. The beautiful people return to their shopping.

Title up:

***'U' is for Utopia***