

# **CODED SELVES:**

## **Reflections on Digital Surveillance**

Are there phantoms humming in all circuits,  
ghosts stitched into the silicon seams?

Who peers at us through the glow of our screens?  
Are there unseen ghosts humming in microchips,  
phantoms stitched between silicon seams?

Authorities track our every click, every whim,  
every late-night search as our movements are siphoned  
through channels of data controlled by digital authorities:  
mapped, measured, redirected at will.

They know the exact temperature at which our hearts combust.  
Algorithms, like digital diviners, now read our minds.  
They chart our subconscious, discerning any possible crime,  
predicting our next purchase, our next political tilt, or next love.  
Our future is merely a matter of mathematical probability,  
a prophecy carved in digital numbers.

So beware how we drift in this current.  
The call of the machine can be intoxicating,  
and we are already deeply tangled in its tide.

In this panopticon of pixels,  
the greatest trick isn't that they're watching—  
it's that they've convinced us  
we want to be seen.



**Nadya:** (with a quiet, chilly whisper) I can't shake the feeling we're all just living in a dream, despite calling it "choice." Every morning I wake up and wonder: which thoughts are still mine? The guardians of the matrix decide which ideas see the light or which get snuffed out. So much is plucked out out before ever taking root! Are we seeing only what the gatekeepers permit?

**Gus:** (a sigh of weary resignation) You're talking about sprawling networks, right? t's a deeply unsettling thought. We've willingly handed over the keys to our digital lives to a handful of unseen architects who can sculpt what we see and believe.

**Bill:** (laughing dismissively) Come on, you two are being paranoid. Is everything really that sinister? Mostly we are being offered customer service, after all. Most interactions simply involve giving us what we crave. It's a feedback loop that optimizes relevancy and reduces clutter. It is not a grand conspiracy.

**Nadya:** (snapping, eyes sharp) "Relevancy" is the key word, isn't it? Who decides what's "relevant?" Who edits the menu of our minds? We're not customers, Bill. We're products being refined. And the scariest part? We're starting to prefer the refined version of ourselves to messy, unpredictable truths. What about things the authorities don't want to show us? What about the stories cut away, the truths buried because they don't fit the desired model? Don't you see? We're not just being fed information; our digital diets are being curated.