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Approx 1400 words

THE REDUNDANCY MACHINE PART 4 – THE MORALE METRICS DEPARTMENT
by
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If you, dear reader, find yourself clinging to the faint hope that Noah Barrow might finally land in a position that values common sense, I advise caution. In the cryptic corridors of TranSys Global, “common sense” often ranks well below “maintaining appearances,” “obeying procedure,” and “keeping Ms. Greene satisfied.”

Yet Another Transfer

Noah’s time at the Complaint Escalation Bureau ended, predictably, with a short meeting and a long sigh. Ms. Burgess handed him a re-assignment slip sealed with the words “Managerial Consent,” as though that were meant to be reassuring. She avoided his gaze.

“*A new opportunity*,” the slip proclaimed, in the optimistic language that often masks corporate exasperation. Noah barely had the energy to question it. He’d tried—yet again—to automate a portion of his job (the Tier 2 escalation forms), and Ms. Burgess had discovered his macros. Two hours later, the re-assignment slip arrived.

In many organizations, a talented problem-solver would be lauded for streamlining tasks. But here, dear reader, it's akin to shouting "Fire!" in a crowded theater—except the only real panic is about not looking busy enough.

Reluctantly, Noah dragged his half-full box of personal effects to the *Morale Metrics Department*, located on the 27th floor. As the elevator pinged open, he found himself face-to-face with a series of posters proclaiming:

- **"Happiness is Productivity!"**
- **"A Happy Worker Is a Busy Worker!"**
- **"Mind the Smile Gap!"**

It felt less like an office corridor and more like stepping into a pastel-colored theme park—if theme parks demanded employee badges and logged daily frown counts.

Meet the Morale Team

A short, spirited woman with bright pink glasses approached him, practically bouncing on her toes. "Hey there! You must be Noah Barrow. I'm Felicity Kim, Lead Morale Monitor."

She ushered him into a suite of open cubicles. Everywhere he looked, employees were studying spreadsheets packed with emoticon-like icons—smiley faces, neutral faces, sad faces, even the occasional star-eyes face. The clatter of keyboards mingled with an unnervingly cheerful pop tune piped through overhead speakers.

"Welcome to the *Morale Metrics Department*," Felicity said, beaming. "We measure emotional well-being across the company, feeding data to the Reliability Machine so it can

recommend positivity initiatives. It's vital work—if people aren't content, how can we expect them to stay *reliably* employed?"

Noah managed a weak grin, scanning the screens. The aggregated data looked like something that might appear in a social media analytics tool, not a major corporation's nerve center. "Right... So, how do we collect this information?"

"Surveys!" Felicity chirped. "Frequent, thorough, and *mandatory* surveys. We track changes in worker sentiment over time. The higher their positivity ratings, the better for overall reliability. If morale dips, we escalate so that new programs—like group sing-alongs or indoor meditation gardens—can be recommended!"

If, dear reader, you believe that genuine happiness cannot be gleaned from repeated forced surveys, you are not alone. But in the swirling logic of TranSys Global, ticking boxes is often more desirable than solving root problems.

The Metrics Behind Morale

Felicity led Noah to his new desk: a bright yellow affair covered in motivational stickers. The screen displayed an ever-updating chart of "Happiness Index" vs. "Efficiency Score." Tiny avatars of real employees hovered along a grid, sorted by their self-reported happiness.

"Your main job," Felicity explained, "is to review flagged entries where employees rate themselves below a 7 in positivity. We contact them for an interview—part motivational pep talk, part data correction. We have to ensure their negativity doesn't affect reliability metrics."

Something about “data correction” made Noah’s skin prickle. “What if the employee has legitimate concerns?” he asked cautiously. “In the Complaint Bureau, I noticed plenty of real issues—”

Felicity’s pink glasses caught the overhead light in a gleam of bafflement. “Oh, that’s not *our* domain. We don’t solve issues; we just keep negativity from spreading.” She tapped a button to highlight half a dozen orange-faced icons. “Take these folks, for instance. They reported dissatisfaction due to recurring printer malfunctions. That’s a facilities matter—but we’ll remind them that a positive outlook is crucial, printer or not.”

Noah sighed inwardly, recalling the countless hours at Paper Trail spent dealing with printers. He started to see a pattern. *We fix everything except the actual problem.*

An Attempt at Real Solutions

Undeterred, Noah spent his first week politely calling employees, listening to their complaints, and recording them in the Morale Tracker. He tried, in his own gentle way, to suggest actual solutions—like installing more reliable printers or letting employees skip the daily surveys if they were truly stressed. But each suggestion was met with the same refrain:

“Oh, that’s not our department. Just keep them *happy enough* to maintain the metrics.”

By the second week, he had coded a new feedback aggregator, which automatically forwarded repeated complaints (e.g., “printer jam,” “overbooked rooms,” “poor air quality”) to relevant teams. If Morale Metrics wouldn’t handle the root causes, at least someone else might.

You may guess what happened next, dear reader. Just as it had in Paper Trail, just as it had in the Conference Division, Noah's drive for efficiency led him straight into another quagmire.

A Friendly But Firm Intervention

During a mandatory "Gratitude Break" (the second one that day), Felicity strolled to Noah's desk, humming cheerfully. "Hey, sunshine!" she greeted, forcing a bright tone. "I've heard whispers you've been... routing data to other departments. Is that correct?"

Noah, determined yet cautious, nodded. "Yes, I wrote a simple aggregator to direct consistent problems to the people who can fix them. If employees see real changes, that'll naturally boost morale, right?"

Felicity's smile faltered. "Oh, dear. That's not how we do things here. If you bypass the official channels, the Reliability Machine might see it as... negative coping." She gave an apologetic shrug. "I know your heart's in the right place, but we have to preserve departmental boundaries. Each division has *its own protocols*."

In a well-functioning society, dear reader, bridging silos and sharing information is considered positive collaboration. In the twisted ecosystem of TranSys Global, it is dangerously close to heresy.

A hush settled between them, the peppy music in the background doing little to mask the tension. Felicity's expression carried pity, as though she were addressing a hopelessly naive child.

“I’m sorry, Noah. Ms. Greene is on her way to meet with you. I—there’s nothing more I can do.”

The mention of Ms. Greene sent a chill down Noah’s spine. He felt the all-too-familiar sensation that his efforts to help were about to be deemed “disruptive.” Another re-assignment loomed.

A Fateful Smile

Sure enough, Ms. Greene swept in a few minutes later, accompanied by an uneasy silence from the entire Morale Metrics staff. She offered a frost-edged grin.

“Noah Barrow. I hear you’ve been tinkering with departmental lines again.” She glanced at Felicity, who seemed desperate to disappear. “We do appreciate your *enthusiasm*, but the Reliability Machine designates each department’s scope with careful nuance. Overstepping creates confusion. And confusion lowers reliability. You understand, yes?”

Noah mustered a feeble nod, the scripts on his computer screen feeling suddenly traitorous. “I was only trying to fix the actual issues so employees—”

Ms. Greene cut him off. “I’m sure your intentions were good. But once more, we must find a new role for you—somewhere you can channel your energies without interfering with established procedures.”

Here, dear reader, we witness a phenomenon unique to TranSys Global: The better you are at spotting inefficiencies, the faster you are shuttled into new positions. While it

looks like career mobility, it's really a subtle method of quarantining bright ideas before they wreak havoc on the splendid illusions.

And so, with that, Episode 4 drew to a disheartening close. The Morale Metrics staff stood by, offering sympathetic smiles, while Ms. Greene handed Noah a formal letter. He didn't even need to read it to know what it said.

Another "opportunity" awaited him. Another department, another labyrinth of rules, another chance to discover how truly twisted this system could be. As he collected his things—once again—Noah felt a growing suspicion that *no one* at TranSys actually wanted real solutions. Or perhaps, dear reader, the problem ran deeper still.

Whatever the truth, he couldn't help but wonder: *How far does the Reliability Machine's influence really go?* And *why* had it built an entire empire of busywork to keep humanity—if not happy—then at least occupied?

If you share his wonder, dear reader, fret not. In the next installment, you may find clues lurking in the most unexpected of places—though, as is usual for poor Noah, each clue may cost him yet another job title.