

Echoes of Tomorrow

By

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In the year 2156, “echoes” were woven into the fabric of everyday life. Since the first reports over fifty years ago, people had grown accustomed to hearing snippets of their future conversations—random fragments from days yet to come. For most, the echoes were minor conveniences, reminders of trivialities like an upcoming meeting or a friend’s call. But for Avery, echoes carried a far heavier burden.

Unlike others, Avery didn’t just hear words; she felt emotions—raw and unfiltered, beneath the conversations. Waves of love, anger, guilt, and fear crashed over her long before the actual exchanges. This ability had proven invaluable in her work as a professional negotiator, but it came with a cost. Relationships felt dangerous, her connections thin and strained, her heart and mind always tethered to a future she could not escape.

She sat in her office running through her latest negotiation notes. Her task was to broker a major deal between two rival corporations competing over cutting-edge research. She had everything prepared—documents, talking points, and counteroffers—but her mind was elsewhere, haunted by an echo from the night before: *“You’re in danger. They know.”*

The voice in the echo had been her own, tinged with anxiety and dread. It felt like a warning, though echoes rarely revealed specifics. She hadn’t mentioned it to anyone, not even Jonah, her closest friend and one of the few who knew about her ability. She was deep in thought when her communicator buzzed.

“Avery,” Jonah’s voice came through, sounding more tense than usual. “Can we meet? It’s urgent.”

Avery’s stomach tightened. “What’s wrong?”

“Just meet me at the café by the research building. I’ll explain everything there.”

Fifteen minutes later, she found Jonah waiting in a secluded corner of the café, his face drawn.

He wasted no time.

“You’ve been getting strange echoes, right?” he asked.

Avery nodded. “Something’s definitely wrong. Why?”

He glanced around, then leaned in close. “It’s Chronos. I’ve been hacking into their systems.”

She froze. Chronos was the government agency overseeing echo research, officially working to help citizens manage and understand the phenomenon. Rumors had long circulated that Chronos used echoes to manipulate outcomes—political events, economic shifts, personal decisions. Jonah had always been suspicious, but she never thought he’d actually go this far.

“What did you find?” she asked, her voice barely a whisper.

“They’re not just studying echoes. They’re altering them. They have tech that can suppress or amplify certain echoes, shaping the future to suit their plans.”

Avery’s mind raced. Could that explain the eerie sensation she sometimes felt, as though her life were being nudged off course?

“So they’re rewriting the future?” she asked.

“Not exactly,” Jonah replied. “They can’t change everything, but they’re guiding key events—elections, corporate power plays, even personal relationships. They’ve been steering the world without anyone realizing.”

A chill settled over her. “Why haven’t you told anyone?”

“I don’t have enough proof. But time’s running out.” He glanced around the café, lowering his voice. “They know about you, Avery. They see you as a threat.”

Her breath caught. The echo from the night before—“You’re in danger. They know.” It had been right.

“They’re onto me, too,” Jonah added, his face grim. “We need to go public with this, but we need undeniable evidence.”

Over the next few days, they worked in secret, compiling everything Jonah could pull from Chronos’s files. The deeper they dug, the clearer the conspiracy became. Chronos had spent decades fine-tuning echoes, carefully nudging humanity along a pre-set path toward their vision of a “controlled” society. The final piece was a classified list of individuals whose echoes Chronos planned to silence—people “too disruptive” to their order. Avery’s name was there.

Sitting in her apartment, Avery stared at the document in shock. The echoes she’d come to dread now felt like a lifeline, her only warning of the danger she was in. “We have to do it,” she whispered to Jonah, who sat across from her, determination burning in his eyes. “We can’t let them keep controlling everything.”

The next morning, they released the files to the public. The documents spread like wildfire, and the revelations sent shockwaves through society. News channels buzzed with discussions on free will and government overreach. Protests broke out, demanding accountability, while Chronos scrambled to contain the fallout.

That night, another echo came—her own voice again, faint and desperate: “They’re coming. You need to disappear.”

The next morning, Avery met Jonah in a deserted alley, her face pale but resolute. “We did it,” she said quietly. “But it’s not over.”

He nodded, his face a mix of relief and anxiety. “We’ll need to lay low. But we’ve given people a choice—a chance to live freely.”

As they disappeared into the shadows, Avery felt a sense of peace, despite the danger that loomed ahead. Her echoes had always chained her to an uncertain future, but now, for the first time, she embraced that uncertainty. The future was untethered, and that freedom, however risky, was everything she’d ever wanted.

The end.