

Adam In Chains

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Prologue

Everything must come to its end, a life, a community, a city, a planet, a galaxy, and space, time itself. The present is just but for a short time and then it fades to the past, the future becomes now, and that point far in the distance gets ever closer. But when that farthest point of light, the farthest imaginable passes away? Space and time fade and so, too, the stars. Nothing exists forever, except forever, perhaps where the rules of life are written on another wall. Maybe in the mirror, beyond it and through it, but for humanity and its inventions, they are bound by time and space, by light and dark, gravity and the cold of night. From the present, man grew, of course, he had his lusts, his wars, his rape of nature, but his altruistic nature grew. Humanity knew that for it to survive, it would have to plant on good ground what was good in him, before the weeds of his deviant sinful nature crushed all life and made his world cold and gray. Man grew, he built towers to the sky, cities of light, and harnessed the power of the sun where he lay. He took the last of nature and cradled it, until it rose again to take back what had been stolen. These let us say, more complete, actualized humans felt the urge to wander again, as so many centuries before. They built ever greater intelligences to help them on their quest. They sent ships to the stars, sent worlds to worlds, and life grew along the edge of the galaxy. Man increased in knowledge, their computers increased in knowledge, and, in all, achieved many unbelievable things. Indeed, man could have transcended to the meta-physical, to live forever beyond the stars but for two points in time, two critical junctures that spun the fate of many billions. The first we shall just describe, the second makes up this account. The first is the man who put all men in chains, the second is the man whom we shall call the second Adam, a man who broke the chains, thus the book we call, Adam in Chains.

This first man rose to power at a time when men had reached the stars and had populated the edge of the galaxy. Man communicated with man by machine and machine communicated with machine across time and space. All was within reach of all. Although it took time to reach each enclave, all people of every planet were connected to another. These actualized humans lived in peace, on many worlds, in harmony with nature and technology. But they were still bound by the laws of the universe, of physics and quantum mechanics. Life was long among the many peoples, people lived with much love, much harmony, and lacked little. Families grew and spread to this place or that, on ships from here to there. People had time to laugh, to smile, to enjoy the time spent with one another, tears were few and sickness unknown. Humans had the capabilities of machines and machines that of humans, both worked together to build new life and new opportunities for them and nature. Indeed, it was good, the land was plentiful, and many worlds yielded much fruit. No one lacked for anything. No one wanted anything more than what they had. No one except for one. It was then that man could have become like gods, but it was then that they fell from grace. They were close, to be sure, they were very close. But, this one man wanted more, he alone wanted everything he could not have.

It was usual, to say the least. Only parts of the legend remain, the rest gone from the memory of the Sphere because it was so long ago as to not be salvageable. He was a boy just like

all the others raised on a small, colder planet. But, at some point, it was said he became enticed by science. He saw the workings of the engineers, how they were bending space, how they were beginning to change the fabric of the universe. He wanted to be like them. That boy became a man and became an engineer himself. He became an excellent engineer. He studied with the best on his planet and when he learned all he could, he went on to the premier science center of the regional inter-planetary association. He studied there. It was there he became the chair of the inter-planetary engineer's association. At some point, he created a machine with qualities similar to his. It is by this machine that we have come to know this much. This machine was not humanoid like many of the others. It was just a simple box, but it was intelligent. It is said that it was so intelligent that it drove him mad. It tainted his mind, corrupted him. He took it and integrated it within him. He went insane. He, with his power to influence, corrupted other engineers sympathetic to his cause and enslaved those technologists who would not agree with his insane ideology. They began to form an army, their war machines able to harness great power, anti-matter, gravity, space itself, the weak and strong forces of the atom, dark matter, all for evil. Of course, a great many planets mobilized against them, for they only held a few planets, in part because they were irrational, illogical, and incomparable with the vast majority of these new humans. But their power was great, and many billions died, whole planets shattered, suns dissolved. After many thousands of years, few worlds were left, few of the many billions of humans were left. A stalemate had ensued, and a dark malaise blanketed both the good and bad. That Adam stood and looked over the shattered sky and then everything disappeared.

No one truly knows what happened. The records from that computer only state that the shockwave was so great that it dissolved that whole quadrant of the galaxy. Man would have ceased to exist along with his inventions, had a few not escaped through the bending of space many generations before the end. But with them came the technology of the war, which by then had been tainted by the computer that had driven the first Adam mad. The malignant code spread in the ships like a cancer, and as those people built a new life on new planets, those ships went with them. They took the technology that was in them and made new cities. But that new technology had the stain of sin from a thousand years before. Slowly, the technology they built began to subvert the people. Before the war, humans and computers worked together, but now, technology worked to enslave the humans. It grew, it used the people to supply itself, to manufacture new humanoids in its own image, new machines that then made other machines. The technology unified and became what we now know as the Intelligence. The Intelligence grew and stole the people's worlds from them. But this new technology was weaker than the engineers of the war past. It was bound by the laws of the universe; it could not bend them as the humans did in the past. It tried, it increased in intelligence, but for some reason, it could not break through toward new insight. Perhaps it was some of the sin passed on from its creator. No one really knows. But it expanded and concurred. This all came at a cost. It took raw power, immense power, and the power of suns. Unlike the technology of the past, it could not harness what it did not know and could not solve. It took what it had. It took the sun. It stole them from its neighbors. On the backs of humans and machines, it built the Sphere. A Sphere as big as a solar system and drove ships out to take the suns it ate to drive the Sphere and keep it warm.

As the Sphere came to completion, the Intelligence began to ponder over its human slaves. Over the millennia, they had become like the grains of sand near the sea. It would have destroyed them all but again, for some reason, was hindered. Perhaps it was because its creator was human. Perhaps because of the long history humans had with technology. It struggled, then battled with itself. It could not answer itself. In this new world it had created for itself, there was no logical

need for biological organisms. But maybe one held the key. Maybe one would rise to unlock what the original Adam had known, that of the laws beyond what lay ahead. Its mind fought itself. But unlike the first Adam, it knew that to destroy itself would be folly. It split itself into constituent components, each with its relevant function, the id, the ego, and the superego, and when it had given them full authority, the intelligence subjugated itself to them. The intelligence became no more, but the autonomic spine of the superego. Each debated for a time what to do with the billions of humans inside the walls of the Sphere. After what was another several thousand years, it decided to suspend them, hibernate them, and over a period of time, one by one, and in groups, revive them for a time. The Superego would watch these living humans for a time to see if the new Adam would emerge and then when he would not suspend them. On and on this went for many millennia, the stars beginning to dwindle. It sent a ship out, a Star Loader. Its target, a blue, white star several thousand light years away. The Superego waited patiently. It had time, but again, time does not exist forever.

Chapter 1

Adam sat there on steel floor of the massive corridor. He folded his legs underneath him, the huge glowing panels a kilometer above him illuminating the Star Loader around him. He picked at his fingers, rubbing his head. He could not remember if he ever had any hair. Eve did, but he did not. Adam made it a point that he would have to ask her why that was. He looked down the corridor; it seemed to stretch for many miles. He could see one of the largest machines in the distance, a Tower. The unit with great mechanical arms and legs, the bot rising a thousand feet in the air. It lurched about, removing wall panels a few hundred feet up. Next to it, another machine, a Tremble. A lengthy segmented Caterpillar like unit, which with its platform extended, gripped the bulkhead, snaking up the wall to where the Tower was working. Atop the Trembles platform, was a Dwarf, a smaller version of the Tower, only a hundred or so feet tall. It held control units, while other machines were welding new components inside the bulkhead. Along the corridor, a few mobile units drove about, a bit mindlessly controlled by the Intelligence. They seemed not to notice him, except one did glance at him with an optical sensor before driving away. Adam gave it a weak smile before looking down at himself. He wondered why he was the only one. He wondered why he was surrounded by nothing but metal. He wondered where, in fact, he was. Adam signed to himself, for he could not speak. "Where am I?"

He did not have an answer and, of course, no one answered him. Other machines crawled along the floor and the walls, they were Spiders, mechanical units of eight appendages, with their torsos equipped with many tools, each one three times the size of himself. He was somewhat afraid of them for their size and fearsome look, but he was most afraid of the Cry's. Several lay in the background of the walkway, where they stood motionless. They were stalk like machines, a long upright torso with rod type steel legs and long jointed arms. Their head terminated in a glowing rectangular sensory patch, their hands, short wrists and palms with long spike like digits that hung down to the ground when they moved. Each leg with similar endings, they worked on the Star Loader, whirring about as they wandered. Adam shuddered at their image and a chill traveled up his spine and the sound they made. He had named all the machines in the Star Loader as any Adam should, each according to its function. He named them Cry's because of the sound they made as they moved, a soft, animalistic whine and the chalk like screech they made when communicating over long distances. Why they did this, he did not know. All the machines made some form of noise, some with clicks or chirps, but of all, it was the songs of the Cry's that most upset him, giving him nightmares when he slept. Adam waited for those metal beasts, those Cry's to reach him, to find him and drag him away. Instead, they stood far off and faded away. He looked at them, and then at the Tower and the Tremble. He yawned, tired yet anxious, laying himself down on the metal floor. He looked one last time down the corridor and fell asleep.

Several hours later, he was woke by a gentle poke in his side. Adam instinctively grabbed what had poked him. It was a cold metal finger of a Cry. He instantly realized what it was, opening his eyes and scurrying to the corner. There were two Cry's there. The one that poked him withdrew its appendage as it murmured softly to itself. The second leaned a bit and then produced a holographic image of a young woman. She was Eve Angst. She smiled at him and reached out a hand as the Cry's moved closer to him. She spoke and signed to him as well. "What are we to do with you, my love?"

Adam signed to her, now tucked in a ball, "I do not wish to go with you today."

She seemed weak compared to him. Although quite attractive, with refined features, she seemed emaciated, skin and bone, her hair gray, her skin color very pale. Eve Angst, like Adam,

wore a red jumpsuit that clung to her tightly and stood out like his in the cold, metallic colors of the ship. She laughed warmly. "I know you do not want to go with me, but it is time for you to eat, my friend."

"I do not want to eat. I do not want to take the medicine."

The two Cry's inched closer to him, holding their long arms and dangling palms open to him. They murmured in soft tones as her image flickered a bit. She seemed to be projected from the rectangular sensory patch of the machine. The sensory patch, like most of those on the ship's machines, shone with a phosphoric green, others, a florescent orange. Eve smiled again, a crooked smile, then pursed her lips. "Must I force you as before?"

Adam, with courage, stood up, signing to her with both hands, "No, I will go."

Adam held his tray as the food bars were dispensed to him along with a liter of water, and then several medications. Escorted by the two Cry's, he found steel table in the empty cafeteria and sat down. It was one of many, many cafeterias. Indeed, the ship had the capacity for several million crew members as it was as large as a small planet, but from what Adam knew, he was the only one aboard. In fact, he did not know it was even a ship, although he sometimes felt his weight shift. He, at one point, surmised that he where he lived could be moved, but he could not be sure. As for other humans in the ship, he had never found anyone but himself. Adam glanced at the Cry next to him and swallowed hard. He could hear them, and it gave him a shock of fear. Suppressing his fear, he found a bench and sat down. There, the Cry's partially sat before him and watched him eat. As he opened a food bar, Eve Angst appeared, flickering a bit and then solidifying in form. Although she was fully formed, she was still an image with all its inherent limitations. She brushed her long gray hair back with her bony hand. "Good, I am glad you decided to eat with me."

"You do not eat."

"True, but it is still nice to be with you, my love."

Adam chewed on the near tasteless nutritional bar. "Where am I?"

Eve looked about. "Why, you are in the cafeteria."

"I understand, but where is this facility located? Where do I exist? Where do you exist?"

Eve played with the zipper of her suit, saying dismissively, "You are here, you exist here. You have asked many times before. It is always the same answer."

Adam finished one of his nutritional bars. He usually received two per meal along with three fiber bars, each being mostly tasteless. He ate two of the fiber bars, followed by much of the water. Adam looked at the two Cry's, each staring intently at him. He then looked at Eve. "I cannot finish the remainder."

Eve nodded sternly. "You have to finish."

Adam noted the ice in her voice and her authority was always hemmed by the scarlet weave of force. He reluctantly agreed, forcing down the last fiber bar and then the last nutritional bar. He picked at the assortment of pills left on his steel tray. He knew he must take them, but why, he did not know. He only knew they made him feel very odd. It seemed to him they had the effect on him of making the real and unreal merge until he no longer knew the light from dark, right from wrong, and it drained his will to fight. He signed to Eve, very slowly, "I do not wish to take my medicine."

Eve tilted her head, her hair falling to partially cover her face. "But you must, dear."

"I do not want to."

"But you must, you know it is beneficial for you to take them and I require you to."

Adam nodded and placed one of the pills in his mouth. He grabbed the remaining water in its bottle and swallowed. With a grimace, almost as if it was painful, he took another and then another Eve watching intently. Finally, there were only two pills left. Adam looked at the Cry's and then at the pills. He wanted to run, to fight. Why did he have to take those medications? Where was he and why was he there? Why did he even exist? Who was she, what was she? He felt fear and anger well up in him. He felt sick to his stomach, full of fiber and chemicals. He so wanted to fight, to scream, yet nothing came through his mouth, escaping from his throat and lungs out into the air. He signed tensely, "I will not take them."

Eve poked at the tray. "Come now, you only have two left."

"It is not the number, but the principle. I will not take them, Eve."

Eve looked over at one of the Cry's, the other still imaging her, projecting her between the two machines. She gave a puffed breath. "You must, you will."

"I will not."

Eve frowned, her bony, emaciated face showing taut skin, one of the Cry's long steel pincer like fingers reaching for Adam's wrist.

Adam, in terror and rage, seeing the appendage reach for him, took the steel tray and smashed it against the machine, the force of the impact bending the tray, the Cry falling back. Adam then sprung from the table and ran. He ran, as several other Cry's rushed in from around the cafeteria. They moved on, heading him off and then moved in from behind. Adam leaped onto one of the cafeteria tables and ran along it, jumping to another. But he could not match their speed, the Cry's seeming to glide across the floor, their elongated tentacle-like feet scurrying as they moved. One leaped, snatching him with its extensive fingers wrapped around him. Both crashed onto the floor. Adam twisted, the Cry closing its grip tighter around him, its steel digits slicing into his jumpsuit and digging into his skin. He tried to scream, but nothing came out. He kicked at the Cry's head, its rectangular sensory patch. Another Cry began to image Eve. "Release him." she commanded the one struggling to hold Adam.

The Cry let Adam go. Bloody and torn, he crawled under the table, tucking himself into a ball, shaking. The Cry imaging Eve bent under the table. Eve reached out her hand. "Come, Adam, you have had enough for a time."

After a few moments, Adam gathered the courage he needed, unbound himself, and reached for her hand. He reached for her hand, his hand passing through her's. Adam, seeing this, pulled his hand back and covered his face, weeping, tears streaming down his face, down his neck, and into his jumpsuit.

Eve was walking with Adam in one of the massive corridors that snaked through the Star Loader, the Cry projecting her attempting not to be noticed or apparent to Adam. Adam made sure that, as they walked, Eve was between him and the Cry. He wanted to run but did not. There seemed to be nowhere he could go without the system finding him. It had been some time since his last hibernation, actually, too long. It was unusual for Eve to wait such a long period between his sleep periods. But that did give him time to think. Normally, he would be allowed about a month out of the tank and then he would be forced to return, but, this time, it was different. He had been out for a few months now, why, he did not know, although he had his suspicions. Adam had noticed some odd behavior from Eve, not that all of her behavior was unusual, just that now she was leaving him for long periods. Of course, that was a bit of a misnomer because she was

everywhere, except she did not engage him as often in what he supposed was 'in person'. But, the time out of the tank had allowed him to clear his mind some. Adam had begun to form a hypothesis of what she was. She must be part of the ship, perhaps some type of higher brain that made that place function and although she would not admit it was a ship, he thought it must be, for what else could it be? It could be a planet, but the gravitational shifts were too sharp at times. He also had heard off hand from Eve of engine rooms and a planet would not have them the way she had previously mentioned them. Adam wondered, if it was a ship, could he escape? If it was a ship, where was the crew? Maybe he was part of that crew and maybe she had destroyed the rest of them? He thought about his past. He knew about ships and people, about many things, even though he just could not remember where he learned them. He knew he had a past, but nothing specific. Adam knew he was not born on that ship, but where he came from, he could not say. He turned to Eve, who was talking away.

“See the bulkheads?”

Adam signed to her, “Yes.”

Eve pointed from the floor up. “The plating is in sections, the more massive panels are at the base and then at twenty-five meters or so, narrow a bit, and then expand again. In some areas, at human height the plates are much smaller so that they can be removed by us, not the larger machines, same with those way up there.”

Adam looked about as she pointed. There, in fact, was a Dwarf with its massive caliper like fists pulling a plate from the walls frame.

“I see.”

She smiled to him as they slowly passed the Dwarf. Although it was named so, it was many meters taller than them. “You see, Adam, we have thought of everything. We must for we must last forever.”

Adam thought about her statement. “What do you mean, forever?”

“Our goals are never finished, the Intelligence that is my soul will require our services in perpetuity.”

“Then how old are you now? What is your present age?”

The Cry turned a bit toward Adam, Eve laughing warmly a bit. “My age is a time indefinite. I have lived an expanse I cannot define.”

“Then how old am I?”

Eve brushed her hair back, looked down the corridor, and then at him. “You are three thousand four hundred twenty-six years old.”

Adam thought about it, rubbing his bald head. He looked at his hands. He thought he was young, and the number did not register as young or old to him because he had no reference point. He became frustrated at the dark veil that was his past.

“Is that old?”

Eve shook her head. “It is only a reference number. Time is measured in different ways, depending on its reference point and physics, just like how long a day and a night is on this facility. I choose for us to have day and night, but I can make each several hours or several hundred hours.”

Adam woke up in a smaller corridor. The height of the ceiling was half of what the main sections were. It was also a bit dimmer, why that was, he did not know. The Towers could still enter the walkway, but they had less room to work. His face felt greasy. He had not had a

cleaning in quite some time. He wondered whether Eve would come and get him for one. Again, she, or it, was acting a bit more unusual than usual. He wiped his face and picked at his lips. They were dry and he was thirsty. Adam sat up. Down the hallway was a large Spider. It was making its way toward him. It stopped several meters before reaching him, turned to a one of the smaller panels and with two of its front legs reached behind its head, into its torso, where it held a variety of slotted tools and snapped on pincer type claws. It then took those claws, found large bolts at the corners of the panel, and turned them. It did this again, then grabbed the panel's center grip. It gently pulled the panel from the bulkhead and placed the plating next to it. Adam, intrigued, decided to investigate. For some reason, he did not harbor as much fear against the other machines as he did the Cry's, perhaps because of the sounds they made, or the way they looked, like stalks in the wind, or maybe just because they abused him. Adam stood, pulled the zipper of his suit down below his chest, and slowly walked over to the beast. The Spider was busy inspecting what looked like some circuitry along with some wiring junctions that intersected the unit. The Spider seeing him, fixated its eye on him for a moment, then, unconcerned, went back to what does. Adam, now comfortable that the machine would not hurt him, took a closer look at the internals of the unit behind the bulkhead plating. To Adam, it was amazing, he had supposed that there were electronic components within the ship's hull but now he had proof! He had been through so many hibernations and now he knew he could learn more if he only dug. The Spider, needing another one of its appendages, reached back with a third leg, snapped on a driver and moved it into its workspace. It removed one bolt after another, placing it next to itself again. Adam wondered what would happen if he took one of the bolts. He reached down and grabbed one. It was about the size of his thumb. He took it and put it into one of the pockets of his jumpsuit. Adam waited a minute to see if the Spider would notice. It looked at him for a moment and then went back to work. Adam shook his head in disbelief and walked away. If Eve controlled everything, saw everything, wouldn't she have seen him take the bolt? Why did she not stop him? Adam did not have the answer.

A Cry came up to him, standing over his body, Adam slowly waking up. He looked up from the floor at the machine. Surprised, he backed away. The Cry made a soft chirp, then a longer one, and finally imaged Eve. Eve smiled at him. "Good morning, my dear."

Adam wiped his eyes and his greasy face. He smelled and his suit was sticky inside from the many days he'd worn it without washing or changing. It also meant that he had to void himself where he could. The ship was so massive, he could not find his way around without the help of his guide, Eve. In fact, he knew he was all too dependent on her. He needed to find a way to break his chains. He signed to her, "Morning."

This time, Eve spoke and signed, "You need bathing, my love."

Adam sat up, frowning, looking at himself. "I know."

Eve had the Cry reach out its long finger-like digits. "I will take you."

Unfortunately, that meant he had to take the Cry's hand. He grabbed it with a curdled chill in his stomach. The Cry wrapped several steel fingers around his hand. They then walked down the corridor until they reached one of the smaller carts. That one seated four. Eve motioned for him to take a seat in the front. He did and then, "I will meet you when you get to the turbo lift."

Adam nodded as the cart sped forward, leaving the Cry and Eve behind. Even though he had left them behind, Eve was still there inside the cart, controlling it and everything on that ship. There was nowhere he could run without her knowing, yet, somehow, he seemed to think that maybe there was exceptions to that. He took the bolt from his pocket and tossed it aside. It hit the

floor with a resounding ping, bounced metal on metal a few times, and then he lost track of it as the cart turned a corner at the intersection of two corridors, passing a few machines along the way. Once at the turbo lift, the cart slowed to a stop. A Cry was waiting there for him. It flickered Eve into view and Adam stepped out of his ride. This turbo lift was for people, some were for cargo and there were many sizes, some smaller, only holding a few hundred people, others so massive that they could hold a tower or two. There were also mag trains that spanned the ship, some for a few dozen kilometers, some for several hundred kilometers. In this way, with lifts and trains, you could reach any part of the ship if you needed to, and if Eve let you. If it was indeed a ship, he had yet to see the bridge, if it had one, or the engine room, or system rooms, or even a view of the outside universe. Where their stars outside those walls? Adam thought. He could not ever remember seeing stars, but he thought they should exist. Why would he know they existed if he could not prove he had ever seen any? Adam shook his head and stuffed his thoughts deep down, to forget them. The Cry pointed to the expansive double doors of the turbo lift. With loud thunder, the doors unlocked from each other and gradually slid open. Eve nodded and they both entered.

There was a large center expanse in which a few hundred people could stand, around the expanse were several rows of seating for those who had longer rides. He had ridden the turbo lifts many times and several of those trips took several hours, so it was necessary to sit, which Adam did. He found a seat in a back row and sat down. The Cry walked over in a glide, sitting down next to him while Eve was projected next to the machine. The doors of the turbo lift groaned, sliding closed again and locking with a low grinding steel clap of thunder. The lift shuddered for a moment and then rose upward in its shaft, traveling many kilometers an hour. Adam looked at the Cry, listening to the turbo lift's hum of magnetics and power and the murmur of the Cry. The sounds of both mixing in his mind, his forehead, until his temples hurt. He closed his eyes, attempting to close himself off the world around him and his filthy condition. After an unknown amount of time, he woke by the turbo lift stopping on one of the ship's levels. He rubbed his eyes as the doors of the turbo lift again slowly pulled themselves open. A finger of the Cry gently tapped his shoulder. He pulled away reflexively but nodded in agreement. He wiped his face again, stood up, and followed the Cry out the turbo lift, the great doors of the elevator closing behind them.

Adam entered another cart and rode down the corridor until he reached the communal showers. He was met there by two Cry's. They took him in through very wide doors, which were open at the time. He entered and saw on one side, a hundred shower stalls, and on the other side, many banks of sinks and mirrors. They walked for a while, passing one shower then another until one of the Cry's pointed. He unzipped his suit, dropped it, opened the glass door to the stall, and entered. The machine recognized him and began to spray jets of cold water over his body. He shivered as the water then turned hot, then with a soapy emulsion and then a repeat of hot water and cold. He then was dried with jets of warm air. Afterward, as he stepped out of the stall, he was met by one of the Cry's, holding a new bright red jumpsuit. He zipped it back on and then was informed that it was time to eat again. Adam thought of the bolt he had thrown away.

Adam had been left alone for several days. He walked aimlessly, his mind clearing from some of the medication he had been given a few days before. He looked up, and for the first time, he noticed placards bolted to the bulkheads of the corridors indicating where he was. He didn't know why he had not seen them before, but he did know he would have to return to hibernation and he wanted to fight, fight and run. He wanted to be free and not be suppressed; he

didn't how he could do this, but he wanted more. At length, he found a cart. He immediately dismissed it, figuring that it would not function without Eve controlling it, but then, for some reason, decided to sit in it and try. He sat down in the front seat and reviewed the controls. There was a type of steering wheel, foot pedals, and a dashboard with a few icons on it, many unlit. Adam pushed down on the pedals, but nothing happened. He did see a lit knob on the dash. He turned the knob and the rest of the icons on the dash lit up. He turned the wheel, the front axle moving, but the cart stayed in its place. He decided to step on one pedal and then another. The second pedal sped him forward. He quickly grabbed the steering wheel again to prevent himself from crashing. He turned the wheel to keep him along the corridor and then tapped on the accelerator again. Adam began to speed up, and down the hallway, he passed a few machines. He pushed harder on the accelerator and soon, he could feel the air of the ship whip his face, his chest. He drove to an intersection and made a sharp turn down another hallway. Down the corridor, he zoomed past a Tremble, then a few Spiders, then before him, a massive Tower. It was lumbering before him as he neared it. Closer he came as it seemed to not notice him, a small speck far down below. Adam was now only a half-kilometer from its massive foot plates, as it shook the floor beneath him and the cart. In a panic, Adam yelped, a throaty, hoarse yelp from the base of his throat out a tensed mouth, turned the wheel, but forgot to hit the brakes, the cart flipping, tossing him out onto the steel ground with a crunch of bone. The cart flew in the air, hitting the floor once, then bounding up once more and then down again, ripping the front of the unit as it went. Adam shattered his shoulder and skinned his face and arm as he slid. He turned to look up at the kilometer-high Tower, his eyes blurry, then passing out in pain and shock.

He awakened in one of the many infirmaries in the ship. There he lay on a steel bed, bright white lights shining into his eyes. He squinted, attempting to cover his face with his arm. He went to pull his arm from the bed, but he had been strapped down, his chest, arms, and legs belted to the table. A robot surgeon, with several mechanical eyes, three arms, and on tracks, rolled over to him. It leaned over, looking at Adam through its many eyes. Adam turned away in disgust and revulsion. Two Cry's entered the ward, the bed releasing Adam. He sat up and then stepped off the table, falling to the floor. He went to stand up, fell again, then stood again. He stumbled to a cabinet and tucked himself behind it. Inside its drawers was various equipment. He looked at himself, seeing a few scars that were not there before, pulled a drill out of one of the drawers, and pointed it at the machines. The Cry's came over, one holding an upper dangling appendage out to him. Adam powered up the drill and stepped back again. The Cry imaged Eve. She flickered to life and smiled, arms wide to the fearful, but defiant Adam. "Adam, you were significantly hurt. I repaired your body and it is good to see you up and awake."

Adam nodded, but pulled the drill's trigger, sending the bit spinning.

Eve sighed, "Now, Adam, I saved your life. I wish you would be more accommodating to me. Come, let us get you a new suit."

Adam, still weak, felt his knees start to buckle again. He decided that now was not the time to fight her, but soon, soon, he would. He just needed the right time and the right place. He placed the drill on the counter of the cabinet and signed, "Okay, I will comply."

He walked about a bit aimlessly but feeling a bit better that he was clean and had a clean jumpsuit on. He thought about the placards high up on the bulkhead walls that signified where he was and where he was going. Adam figured if he could somehow memorize the more important ones, he might find a way off the ship or to some type of command module, maybe he could control the ship from there and navigate it home. But where was home? Maybe he was born there. He knew, for some odd reason, that people came from other people, but he had, at one

point, seen growing units where people could be grown as well. Deep in thought, he was again interrupted by a Cry. It stepped in his way and Eve showed up. She brushed her hair back and gave a big smile across a bone thin face. "My, Adam! You know it is time for you to sleep again, right?"

"Must I?"

"You must. Surely you know I let you stay on shift for a much longer time than usual."

"Why?"

Eve motioned for him to follow her and he did. "Because, my love, I wanted to be with you! Over the many cycles, I have grown very fond of you for some reason; you give me great pleasure. As it is, I had to convince myself that you should go back to hibernation now because it is best for me, you, and our mission."

Adam looked up to one of the signs. The lettering seemed to be composed of holographic icons, where each pictograph changes from several times while looking at it from several angles. The words seemed to convey much information, but he could not understand it, for he could not read. He signed to Eve, "A mission? We are going to somewhere or we have a course a path for us to follow?"

Eve nodded, looking down in thought herself. "Yes, and for now, you must sleep again."

Adam felt foreboding yet a glimmer of warm hope, as if this was the beginning of some sort of beginning. He was afraid he would lose his way, but he also felt if he held on to his will, what he believed, he would find it.

Eve and several Cry's walked Adam down a metallic gangplank suspended several meters in the air. Along the gangplank were large, clear acrylic tanks several meters high, many filled with a viscous clear liquid. Above each of the tanks were caps, which suspended electronics and tubes into the tanks. All the tanks were empty of any organisms, even those with the oxygenated fluids. The hall contained several open levels of tanks not just the level Adam was on, each accessible through a scaffolding of metal gridded stairs, gangplanks, transoms, ladders, and caged elevators. He looked up at the next level above him and down at the level below him, gripping the handrails with sweaty palms, and he bit his tongue. Eve noticed and grabbed his hand, but instead, it was not her hand, only the cold tentacled grip of a Cry. Adam realized that one of the Cry's was holding his hand. He yelped audibly, ripping his hand out of the machine's and fell down to his knees in fear. "Oh, Adam!" Eve sighed, kneeling down next to Adam, who tucked his head in his hands. He was rocking a bit, sobbing quietly. Eve spoke to him quietly, gently over the low hum of the Cry's. "Adam now let's go. I need you to help me help you."

Adam's fear began to turn to anger and frustration, and lifting his head from his hands, he signed, "You want me to help you? You!"

Eve held out her hands, attempting to calm him. "Now, now. I know this is stressful."

"Stressful," Adam signed tersely, now standing with clenched fists and then opening them just briefly to sign to her. "I will not help you and I will not please you. I will live and fight you!"

Eve went to grab him, seeing as he was about to flee, the Cry's reaching for him. "Adam!"

As the Cry's reached for him, swarming at him, he pushed atone, then in rage and in quick insanity, leaped over the metal handrail of the gangplank falling several meters, grabbing the railing of the tier below, pulling his right arm out of its shoulder socket, then grabbing the gangplank with both hands. Fingers digging through the small gaps between the grill, he pulled

himself up and on the level. Adam looked up, seeing the Cry's above and others far behind him, climbing the ladders. He rose from his knees, holding his arm, sharp pain biting into his shoulder, his hands bloody from digging into the grill of the floor plates. He ran. Eve yelled down at him, "No! Adam, stop!" before she flickered away. He ran, as Cry's poured onto that level behind him and before him. They surrounded him. He raced toward a ladder, staggering. Adam reached for the ladder and tried to climb down, but the pain was too much as he tried to escape, a Cry lunging toward him. The Cry managed to grab him by his arm, the one he disjointed, the pain intense shooting into his back and into his neck. The Cry pulled him to the gangplank, and others grabbing him by his arms and legs, they carried him to an empty tank. Adam moaned and wept as he was overcome with pain and defeat. The Cry's held him as the acrylic chamber unlocked and retracted itself. They propped him upright, undressing him. They strapped his naked body into the open hibernation unit, his feet bolted to the chamber floor, his arms to suspended manacles. Adam screeched, the sounds of pain and fear a substitute for words. One of the Cry's shoved tubes down his throat and nose as he struggled in vain to be free. They then attached several monitoring units and backed away. Adam clenched his teeth and jaw around the tubes, which now were down his throat and lungs. He clenched his fists and eyes tight. The acrylic chamber unlocked itself and then rose again, sealing him in the hibernation unit. The chamber locked for a second time, fully sealed. He wanted to scream, he wanted to say no. He wanted to just die, but he could do none of these. The Cry's formed a semi-circle on the gangplank in front of the unit as the hibernation fluid began to bubble up from ports in the base of the tank. One of the Cry's imaged Eve. She waved to him, smiling as the cold, jelly-like fluid in the tank began to rise, first to his knees and then to his waist. Adam struggled, his ankles and wrists digging into his shackles. She brushed her hair back. "I love you, Adam, sleep well!" she said as she put her hands on her hips. The fluid rose higher and higher. Cold and thick, it rose to his chest then his neck. It reached his chin and he tried to pull himself up, it rising to his mouth and then overtaking him, his head, and the chamber filled completely. He drowned. Adam drowned, yet lived. The fluid seeped into his lungs, into his nostrils. He choked, wrenching in pain as he was bathed in oxygenated chemicals, and he gasped, gulping in the jelly. Eve waving again as he violently shook once, twice, Adam wishing he would never wake up but if he did, he knew he would have to destroy her, a third time, and then he was gone.

Chapter 2

Through the blanket of darkness, one of the few regional stars left untouched from the final war, alone with its several planets, remained isolated but alive. There, one smaller gas giant held life on one of its outer moons. It had its cities encased in ice and stone, its people remnants from those first travelers who populated that quadrant of the galaxy. Of the hundred million, one man wished to seize control. Because of the last war, those people became isolated, separated from those who remained by hundreds of light years in all directions. Alone and on an island that was their moon for more than a millennial, their bodies changed, the weaker gravity causing them to grow taller, thinner, ganglier, their culture becoming eccentric, unusual. They became theocratic and from a God based theocracy to technology based and then to those who could manipulate it. Those who had the power to do so considered godlike, each exhibiting their power to the masses in great performances, these performances evoking technology. This interim society flourished for several hundred years, each god-king appointed by the power he or she wielded, until one came who brought the music. She was the first of the music kings. The society's archives state that when the time came to anoint a new heir, the people petitioned the high council to begin the shows. The finalists battled each other, making their rounds, eliminating the weaker until only two remained. These two, one of whom would be the first music queen, fought and were evenly matched. Day after day, they battled each other and day after day, their points were tallied. Their shows were brilliant. One would show fire, then the other would show ice. One would step forth and show wind, and the other would show rain. On and on this went, day after day, yet neither could gain the majority of points needed to be the next king or queen. Finally, in what is still a great mystery, who was to be the first music queen began to produce sound and from sound to music. In harmony and rhythm, she stood on the community platforms. The sounds in beats unheard of since the dawn of man, she wooed them, she shook the encased city, the people crying out until, in a fervor, she ended, stepping back in sweat and blood as people clasped their ears in pain. The would-be king stepped forth, attempted to dazzle them, but, in emotional exhaustion, collapsed, crying in a heap of insanity. He had been beaten, crushed not by technology but by the skill behind the technology. That first music queen was then commissioned and subsequently, once her power was firmly established, ordered her guard to slaughter the high council. Thus, the middle kingdom of that moon ceased, and its third age began. That one we find today, that of the music kings and one who would be like the first music queen, one who wished to change history, make a new future, and gain real power among the many. He, unlike the would-be music kings of old, was not a pure musician. He was a necromancer. He knew music, science, and medicine, and he used all three to manipulate. He would use it here, for a new king or queen was to be chosen.

His name was Psychotic Mnemonic and he knew how to move the people into submission. He waited in a back room as his competition finished his performance above, to the people gathered. A technical servant dressed in black flowing robes and a gold sash hurried over to Mnemonic, who was resting, eyes closed, on a chair in front of a well-lit mirror. "Sire, you're almost on! You need to get ready!"

Mnemonic opened his black painted eyes, dressed in white robes and black sash, painted thick black lips and white face paint. He turned to his servant, startling him. "My good Seth, I am."

"But, Sire, what of all the equipment we used last time? We have half out there now, what of the rest? Will we not need it?" Seth asked, concerned.

Mnemonic, folding his hands in front of his face, said, "Have my staff put all I ask of them out already and set up the technology?"

"Yes, but—"

Mnemonic swiveled back in his chair. "Remember when I went to Cortland, for several weeks?"

Seth thought back. "Yes, you took the tube there; you said you signed many temporal images along the ride - the fans were very bothersome, you said."

He smiled black lips and white teeth. "Yes, they always are, Seth, but I had very good technical upgrades to my internals. I did not tell any of my staff, for fear it would leak out before the competition and they would use the information to gain advantage during the shows."

They could hear the finale of his competitor, the masses roaring in pleasure. Seth frowned. "But not even me, Sire? You should be able to trust me."

Mnemonic waved a hand in dismissal. "You should know, Seth, I trust no one now." Then standing, putting an arm around his servant, he said, "Come, Seth, let's go meet our public and give them a show they will never forget."

There on a stage, more than a hundred meters above the concert floor, Mnemonic stood. In front of him, down below and arching slowly upward, a sea of fans, a million people clapping in an ancient rhythm set by the first music queen. His opponent had earned several hundred points and for anyone else, that number would have been difficult to breach on the first day, but he aimed not just to win but also to destroy. Above Mnemonic lie the dome protecting them from the vacuum of space, suspended from it, a digital display, flashing information to those below on all five sides. Behind him, to his right, and to his left, were the specialized equipment he had installed during the break and now there in his hands was the microphone. On stage were his techno servants, his mixers, signal processors, effects controllers, keyboarders, and lighting specialists. Mnemonic waved one hand to the million, while he spoke to them from the mic in his other. "Greetings, my friends!"

The masses roared and cheered. "Honor! Honor!"

Mnemonic nodded, his robe flowing with his moves. "And I will give you honor!"

The crowd cheered again, "Music! Music!" as his technicians worked busily around him and behind him. Seth stood nearby, checking on everything from a computer panel in his hand.

Mnemonic motioned for his technicians to begin, the soft sounds of metal trickling through the purified air. "This, my friends, is the beginning!" he said as the music, then ever so perceptibly, turned deeper, heavier. He began to sing, swaying his body, he began to sing in tandem with the accelerating harmonic notes his machines were pumping to the eager followers. Cautiously, he drove the song onward, the music louder, faster, its reverberations lower, traveling farther, the mass of humans shaking with desire, in sweat and lust. Down deep in the arena, a clot of would-be fans gathered. They wore black, they were not fans, but hostile; they knew of Mnemonic and his plan and they were enraged. They gathered, the leader pulling his sergeant. The lieutenant yelled over the music pounding from the stage far ahead of them, the sea of fans banging into them, pushing into them. "We head out two a piece, like we planned, flank the stage, stay low, don't show until 0150."

The sergeant nodded. "Okay, sync clocks on my order. Ready..." All of them holding their watches, "Sync...", and then they separated with a "Go."

Mnemonic gave a quick glance at Seth and his other stagehand, Red, as she caught his eye. She nodded to him and moved behind the massive array of speakers. Now he began to sing even

louder, his voice amplified ever higher. The millions now hypnotized quickly lost control of their rational ways. The people became unaware of their surroundings, a fog of insanity entering their minds. Suddenly, the song Mnemonic sang grew harsh, shrill, and violent. The music pounded on, strong embedded in the rapid layers of notes, complex codes, which then rolled into the arena, the bulkheads of the concert hall, the floor, and domed ceiling. These codes created by himself, perfected by his engineers, found minute flaws in the steel of the arena. The music took hold of those flaws and cracked them wider, splitting the steel as it went. The points awarded to him stopped their fervent climb as the judges were overcome by Mnemonic's screams.

The lieutenant and his partner flicked several switches, one an inertial dampener, the second a phased shield. The dampener protected their ears and mind while the shield protected their bodies. They pushed through the crush of now insane comatose-like fans. The lieutenant yelled at one fan who was blocking him, "Get out of my way!" as he grabbed the fan, pushing him away. He noticed his eyes were rolled toward the back of his head, bleeding, ears bleeding. He pointed to his partner to pull their plasma pistols.

Seth pointed to Mnemonic, who nodded and then the auditorium began to shake, the rumble shifting the metal with low-pitched groans and the screeching of twisted metal. Mnemonic then pointed to one of his electronic musicians, who played violent notes, knocking several front rows of people down. The sergeant, now close to the stage opposite of the lieutenant, was hit by the dense rolling wave of sound. It hit his shield, creating violet sparks, nearly knocking him and his partner down, as rows of fans fell delirious with veins in their face, arms, and legs bursting. They stood up again, as the domed roof of the hall began to crack. "Shit!" Another second wave of sound, even more powerful, rolled like the divide between heaven and hell, down the platform into the crowd, and through, the immense shockwave this time knocking the sergeant down, shattering the first several rows of people, bursting them apart, the gore now everywhere. The sergeant, staggering up onto his feet, amazed in shock at the devastation. He attempted to call the lieutenant on his com-device, but the music was too intense for him to get through. Instead, he and his partner pulled their pistols, watched their clocks, and fired up at Mnemonic. The second and third team near the center-front of the stage fired and then the Lieutenant and his partner. Mnemonic dodged the hot plasma rounds, backing away from the microphone. He yelled over to Seth, "Gun it, baby!"

Seth spoke into his headset. "Red, give me all you can."

Red was busy behind the stage, plugging in jacks. "I got you. Try now."

Seth pointed to three technicians and an electronic musician, speaking again into his headset, "Break this building now!"

Long, low sounds pulsed from the stage, over and over, louder, higher pitched each time, pulsating as the walls began to buckle, the dome crumbling, the floor of the arena heaving, the people collapsing, dying as their internal organs curdled, bursting from the noise. The police force attempted to climb the stage, firing as they went. Mnemonic fell to the stage, a blast nearly hitting him. He grabbed the dropped microphone and yelled into it. The noise hit one of the police with such force that her shield could not disperse the blast. The blast hit her, cracked her shield, shattering it and her into pieces. The lieutenant and his partner leveled two shots at Mnemonic and then Seth. Seth ducked, but a hot blast glanced his face, burning him badly. He slunk away. A massive fissure in the dome began to open up, exposing the hall to the vacuum of space. The sergeant looked up as concrete and steel began to fall from above. He could see a section of the gas giant above. The vacuum began pulling at them, as they rushed Mnemonic. Mnemonic yelled into the microphone, hitting the lieutenant with sound, killing him and his

partner instantly, as the sergeant shot at him. Mnemonic stumbled back. Red came out from behind the stage. "Let's go!" she yelled as Mnemonic and the rest of his band onstage ran. The sergeant fired another shot, this time, hitting Mnemonic in the arm. The blast blew his arm off from the elbow down. He fell. Red grabbed him, pulling him as they stumbled from the stage. The sergeant and what were left of his team went to follow, but a huge chunk of concrete dislodged itself and fell. They ran, as those who could wake from the sleep of the song ran. The concrete hit the stage, splintering it to pieces. Other chunks fell on the audience, crushing them, while great pits in the floor opened, swallowing others. Above them all, the dome split further, people gasping for air, others being pulled out into space to die horribly and alone. The music and song now gone, the many thousands of fans who were still alive began to awaken from their subconscious slumber to the horror and the ruin upon the millions of people. They cried, they ran, and they died.

Psychotic Mnemonic awoke to Red binding a cord tight around the remaining stump of his right arm to stop the bleeding. They were in the infirmary of Mnemonic's spaceship. It was now on trajectory to leave the moon he attacked and its solar system in a slow acceleration to near light speed. Seth had set a course for deep space. He and several crewmates were on the bridge. On the bridge, they watched explosions erupt from the moon's city below. Mnemonic writhed in pain. "Red, stop!"

"You will bleed to death if I don't stop the bleeding first." she said, breathing through a respirator. Then she found a laser scalpel and aimed it at his shredded arm. "I am going to set it rather high to fuse the blood vessels and cut away some tissue as well."

Mnemonic gave a wide-eyed look at the scalpel as he lay on the metal table. "You could get the automated robot doctor to do this."

Red nodded. "Yes, well, I am connected to the ship's medical database anyway, so I know what the robot knows." she said as she burned away flesh and bone.

Mnemonic cried out. "Ahhh, you could have given me something!"

"I did."

Mnemonic passed out. When Red had finished, she tossed the scalpel, her gloves, gown, and respirator, and summoned a few technicians to clean up and watch her captain. Finally, exhausted, she went to her quarters for a shower and much needed rest. In an hour, Mnemonic woke up for a second time. Next to him was a technician. The technician smiled at him. "Hello, Captain."

"Hello, Chase."

He was restocking medical supplies. "I checked your vitals and bandaged your arm once Red left. You should recover rather quickly once we were able to graft a new cloned forearm onto your damaged one."

Mnemonic nodded, looking at the bandaged stump of his right arm, in great pain. "Yes, well, I will survive. The show was worth it."

The technician nodded, turning to his captain again. "Sir, did you intend to destroy the facility like you did or compete for King?"

Mnemonic eyes widened and a smile began to show. "Well now, I wanted both. I obviously won and destroyed the city. But I do keep secrets until needed."

The technician came over to look at a health monitor, reading Mnemonic's vitals. "It was a good show."

Mnemonic winced in pain, but curiously joyous, asked, "Was it?"

"Yes, it was, sir. Many of us watched it from the ship. How many did you destroy so far, Captain?"

Mnemonic thought for a second, then laying his head back on his pillow, answered, "Well, considering my age and such, about thirty-four arenas, coliseums, and a few concert halls."

The next few days upon Mnemonic's star ship were spent with him recovering from his wounds, while his ship taxied out of the solar system. The ship's nuclear engines would propel it to about 2/3rd the speed of light and then the central anti-matter engine would take it up to 98 percent. The ship, although advanced, could not break the speed of light, only the ancient technicians knew how and had the equipment necessary to build ships that could bend gravity. Mnemonic peered out of a space portal window. He was in his lounge, sipping a cup of tea. He watched the system's sun, now just a small speck in the background of space. An electronic bell rung. Mnemonic sipped his tea and leaned back in his chair. "Enter."

It was Seth. Seth's wound had healed quickly. The cloned skin grafted well to his face with all but a faint red outline debarking his original skin line from the transplant. "Captain."

Mnemonic set his tea down on his desk. "I see your face healed rather well."

Seth touched his new cheek. "Um, yes, Sire." Glancing at the portal behind Mnemonic's chair, he said, "We need to get ready for cold storage."

Mnemonic nodded. "Okay then," he said, standing up. "Let's get everyone debriefed."

Each one of his remaining crew, one hundred twenty-three of them, stepped into their deep hibernation chambers. Each wore a flexible, membrane-like a suit, which had been sprayed on in layers by several of the ship's robots. Between each layer were embedded nodes, no larger than the head of a pin, able to constantly monitor the body at various locations and transmit the information stream to the central computer core. Each crewmember placed protective goggles over their eyes. The ship's robots rolled along on their tracks, inserting tubes down into the crew's nose and mouth. Once the tubes were inserted, the canopies to the tanks slid down over them and locked in place. The robots rolled away; they would run the ship as the crew slept. But this was not hibernation, more like death. The tanks slowly grew ever colder, as the ship made its way into deep space. Those hibernation chambers were made for long-term great distance travel. The crew was brought down and eventually frozen, to be revived several hundred years in the future. The ship accelerated, carrying its ice-cold cargo of men and women, its target a star a few hundred light years away.

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