**Prologue: The Awakening**

Once, there was a dream, a dream that started everything. A dream that man could do anything, be anything, a dream that we could achieve that which was not meant to be achieved. We believed that we could surpass even God himself, that we were created for the sole purpose of overcoming our own creator, that we were more perfect than the hands that made us. Such is the nature of man: a race to compete against one another and against the divine, a challenge to prove our worth as ‘intelligent life’. Man, however, is an inherently wicked creature; he is one to betray his fellow man for material wealth, to indulge in sanguine pleasures to repulsive levels, to kill his own kind for the sake of his own pride and motives, to be seduced by power. He is a clever and cunning animal that manipulates the environment around him to his own liking such that he can pursue his sinful desires uninhibited. When communication between fellow humans was denied by practical barriers, man gifted himself with the art of language. When the load upon his back proved too heavy for his slothlike nature, he fashioned the wheel. When the earth refused to yield him any more game, he sowed seeds and cultivated himself a source of sustenance. When his neighbors began to become troublesome, he crafted a sword and went to war. In time, man advanced his plight to new heights, trampling his rivals in order to make himself the alpha amongst the pitiful omegas wallowing in the mud below. The spoken word became the telephone, the wheel became the automobile, the field became the slaughterhouse, the sword became the firearm. Throughout history, man has defiled the image he was given at his creation in an attempt to best his master, committing heinous acts of violence and avarice to climb the stairs to a heaven just beyond his reach. The year was now 2021 and man had already been to the Moon as well as other places among the stars. He had built vast networks of instant communication across the globe and amassed more knowledge than all of his ancestors combined in just a few years. He had built massive cities of glass and steel that tore the sky asunder with their looming pinnacles of economic progress. He had devised weapons of warfare with the power to annihilate entire nations with the press of a button. The world as we knew it was supposed to be a paradise thanks to the works of our forefathers and the prodigies of our own age who kept the onward march of innovation trudging on into the uncertain future. The world, however, was far from perfect; just as man’s inventions had evolved, so had his many evils. Power was the currency, wealth was the power, warfare was the new game of politicians, corruption was the machine that drove governments, drugs and alcohol and other contraband fueled the populace, consumerism was the affliction, violence was the cure, sex was the obsession, hatred was the new norm. We were far from perfect, sure, but, as long as we had all of these new toys to play with, the childish human society would have its thirst whetted. Everybody before then had thought that the true enemies were things like disease and violent criminals, but we had since all but eradicated most of those ‘petty’ worries. The new enemy, unbeknownst to the bloodshot eyes of the ever-watching populace, was they themselves. Inside, we all had an inner demon that told us to step upon our brothers and sisters amongst our species in order to rise to a ceiling that was growing higher every day. There was no such thing as *winning* anymore; there was only being *the best, the greatest, the only one*. Humans wanted to be interconnected but also wanted to be alone as ever before so that they could pursue this dream of being the sole victor. Billionaires and dictators alike could buy their own island or even country to do so, but there was no defacto way to be the best when, in the outside world, there were people who plotted to penetrate their little scheme. Man, despite his infinite dreams, found himself unable to push himself further, he found himself caught in an endless cycle of pointless innovation. There were simply things in his complex mind that could not be achieved within his lifetime, things that even he himself deemed impossible. He looked to the stars and the farthest corners of the Earth in order to chase this fleeting dream of his. Nowhere did he find anything; an answer was yielded by no physical thing known to man. It was then that he turned to the non-physical to make his dreams come true. It turned out, he had created something that could stimulate his desires, something that extended his own abilities without requiring any effort from his physical form. He found his solace not in this world but in the virtual world. Caught in a flurry of zeroes and ones, his dreams became reality, fantasy became commonplace in an increasingly drab world. Never before had humanity experienced such a boost in vitality as when they found out that they could abandon their own world for one that existed behind a screen. Man had found his final frontier, a place where he could truly come closer to the divine, a place where he could write the rules that had already been written for him in the physical world. He had infinite power now; he was now the master of his own realm and was unchallenged by any other. Mankind had awakened finally, the breath of freedom and power filling his lungs like it never had before. It was a new age, an age of triumph for man, an age where he believed he could finally overcome that which could not be overcame, an age where he would challenge God himself. However, the real question was: what happens when the creator takes the power back?

In the year 2018, mankind reached his self-proclaimed pinnacle in this long crusade for achieving a so-called “flawless” world of his own creation. As if the Trumpets of Judgement themselves had sounded their glorious cry, a new science was born known as neurological cybernetics. The birth of this technological revolution opened the world to a whole new level of innovation and possibilities, limitless options with which to command the future of our world. The brainchild of this movement was the Nanocerebral Microprocessor, also known as the NCMP for short. The NCMP was a massive leap forward in a variety of fields and enabled researchers to extend their abilities far beyond what was normal just months before its release to the consumer market. Neurological cybernetics, pioneered by the cybertronics company, Teuton Bionics, was designed to further the limits of the brain by allowing it to use almost telepathic communication to allow humans to control inanimate electronic objects such as computers, robots, and cyberkinetics. The new abilities available to people everywhere were seemingly unlimited: workers could use technologies from this field to wield cyberkinetics which would increase their strength manyfold, scientists could access multiple servers and databases at once to increase their speed with finding information to aid their research, and just about anybody could use the technology to do most anything faster and more efficiently in their lives. Within the short period of a year after the advent of neurological cybernetics, myriads of new medical advances had been made in addition to a countless number of discoveries in the other scientific disciplines, bettering society more in one year than they had in the twenty years prior. Mankind was living better, living longer, living...happier. The thirst for discovery, however, was not sated in the slightest by these new technologies; man needed to go farther, he needed to get creative with our ingenuity. Alas, the NCMP was seen as the most appropriate development of the new era to experiment with. The reasoning behind this decision was because of the brilliant engineering that went into this product of the cybernetics movement: the NCMP was small enough to be able to be injected by way of a hypodermic needle into the portion of the spinal column located just above the nape of one’s neck and had the processing power of a corporate-grade CPU. There were various renditions of the NCMP released into the market just after its approval of use for general consumption by the Unites States FDA and the United Nations Technological Logistics Committee including the Ares-class chip for use by national military and intelligence members, the Hermes-class chip for use by members of corporate ventures and business logistics officers, the Athena-class chip for everyday use by the average civilian for various light tasks, and the Apollo-class chip for entertainment and gaming applications. Before a person was permitted to use or even receive the chip, they were required to enter a three month training program to acquire a license in which they would learn proper usage of the device and how not to tax their brain through overtasking of the chip or frying the chip and, hence, their brain along with it. Then, the question was raised by governments as to how they could keep their citizens in line and prevent immense amounts of cybercrime. Solutions were brought from all corners of the globe, but, eventually, the answer was found by Teuton Bionics just as they had years prior at the start of the cybernetics revolution: they would create a special, omnipotent chip that would leash and monitor the capabilities of the lower-level chips to prevent a meltdown of the power structure in countries. This chip was known as the Zeus-class chip and was kept locked in a discrete chamber somewhere in the country’s capital, only to be used by a person when voted upon by that country’s governing body. With all this power at mankind’s hands, man had singlehandedly created the most potent and terrifying invention since the idea of nuclear weapons was first conceived. This, this was the world in which we lived. This was the world that mankind’s most prolific generation would come to inherit...and it was the world they could very well end in the blink of an eye.