Nothing really ever seemed to make sense after I had left the facility for the final time. It was to the point of where, I am unsure whether anything had ever made sense to begin with, and now I am potentially witnessing the clarity of it all, that there was never an order to it, only chaos.

Could I even call it a victory? Sure, the threat was neutralized as far as we were concerned, our mission was done. It was over. But at what cost? Would it have been better to simply have died, or to never have been involved in the first place? I will never be able to ‘not know’ what happened there, yet I will never know either. Sometimes I wonder whether anything had ever happened at all… if it was all some sort of sick joke, a fever dream to the extreme. If I were to wake up and realize all of it was a disconnect from reality, some sort of psychosis creating a false memory of the events that transpired, causing me to be the way I am now. If that were to happen, I would have thought that I died and went to heaven.

As for the others, I am uncertain of their fate. From what I had been told, the base had been completely shut down. Everything had been thoroughly washed and dismantled for scrap, never to be powered on again. The habitat was geostationary, orbiting a molten world. Traversing interstellar space is one of the more comfortable parts of the job. The pay is great for the risk. They say going into cryosleep is incredibly dangerous but personally, I’m never more relaxed. Even if things went badly, the people frozen in liquid nitrogen would be the last ones to suffer whatever fate was bestowed upon their custodians. I understand why most would be hesitant to subject their body to medically induced metabolic death, only to be reanimated again at their destination. Being an interstellar contractor pays off, but that is if you make it home to spend it.

After destroying the queen, the hive went into a battle frenzy. Every ounce of material and organism threw its full capability at us, for a last swing of vengeance. There was zero chance we would have survived on our own in there. A man can only carry so much ammo and when the enemy is relentless, uncaring for itself or others, like a horde with no sense of self preservation. What had to be done to save us, using the dust. . . I wish and believe there could have been a better option. What happened though, evidently worked because I am still alive to tell the tale.

From the sky dropped canisters, possibly hundreds of them. When they landed, they puffed and puffed and began to pollute the entire area. Overwhelming plumes of the dust made it impossible to escape, it reached every space and crevice of breathable air. It was irritating to the skin and worse, the lungs. I don’t know how much I breathed, but I guess it was more than I would like to admit to myself. The dust was designed to stick to the exoskeletons of a bug and kill it with cuts or dehydration. I don’t understand the specifics of its action, but what I do know is that nothing survived, and I mean all life was eradicated on the base by the time cleanup started towards the end of the week.

All of it is a blur to me now. I guess that’s for the best. Due to the nature of the fight I could not put on a mask immediately. I had to use a makeshift face covering with my suit. By the time I got a proper mask fitted on my face, the inspiration of my lungs already had the telltale sound of injury. The adrenaline wore off in bed the night after we had been evacuated and then I cried. Medical staff and scientists familiar with the dust had no answer for me, only that we wait and see. Initially I had despair due to the uncertainty of whether my condition would improve or get worse. Its been years since the incident and I believe my body has repaired itself to an extent. Or maybe I have come to accept the cards I’ve been dealt.

All of this, it is what I am reminded of with every moment of every waking breath that I take.