

Chapter 1

I cannot quite remember why I am in a stark white hospital room.

A door to the room opens.

"Sir, we have some concerning news, baring your checkup," a woman in a blue scrub indicates.

"How so?"

"You've been diagnosed with brain cancer," "We suspect you'll live another 5 years."

I'm not sure I heard her right. *Brain Cancer?* The New's is still too real for me to believe... I'm only 55 years old. *Am I going to die at the age of 60?* In 2080 this is very early for death; on average the life expectancy is around 90 years old.

Chapter 2

This will be the last time I visit Axel's. I have things to do... I am not sitting around to die in 5 years' time.

"Tom?" The voice is on the higher side.

I look up. The one who said my name is Ender, Axel's grandson. Ender turned 14 years old not too long ago.

"You haven't told us one of your funny jokes."

Phew... I thought he noticed. You see I haven't told Axel about my diagnosis yet.

I sigh, "What is it called when technology gets in the way of progress?"

"Uhm... I'm stumped," Ender mutters, still trying to figure it out.

"Science Friction"

He laughs, "Your jokes are good as always," he adds, "you pass."

Pass what? So, he did notice I was down.

Ender walks over to the food printer in the kitchen.

"What should I make today?" he mumbles.

"Are you using that lazy machine again, Ender?" Axel walks into the kitchen.

“Yeah... so what?” Ender grins.

“Well... in my time, we had to actually bake the food, not use some lazy machine!”

Axel loves to make that joke. *He's not wrong.* When I was younger, we did have to prepare food on our own. The first time people saw a food printer, they were astonished. Food had always taken up so much of peoples' time. As you can Imagine, the food printer was a revolution.

Chapter 3

I have another title in this world: CodePhantom. When I was in my younger days, I was one of the world's best hackers. I have since retired. Today, my skills will come in handy again. Elections for Ascendex happen in a few months. If I can get into a place of power, then maybe I can find a way to cure my brain cancer. I would have a whole lab worth of scientists willing to work for me.

All I need to do is change my identity, and then Hack into one of the government buildings. After all, there's a reason they called my CodePhantom in the days. My whereabouts and identity are still unknown to this day; I never leave a trace for anyone.

By hacking the government's system, I can create panic within the system. While everyone's in panic, I will change my identity to Mort Phobus. I will gain people's trust by discovering who the Code Phantom is. Tom will die in this world and Mort will be born. When I release who the Code Phantom is a few weeks later, and he is no know where to be found. They will check the health records.

I will modify the information they will read on the health records. By making it look like Tom was diagnosed with brain cancer more than 5 years ago. They'll question whether he is still alive.

They will conclude Tom is dead, because the death record will indicate his death was only a few days ago.

The news will spread, and I will gain popularity. Mort found the Code Phantom—the Code Phantom was Tom Furbos.

It's all been planned. The time has come to execute CodePhantom's last feat.

Chapter 4

People are panicking, just as I had hoped. When one of the government's buildings was hacked, it didn't take long for everyone to conclude this was Code Phantoms work. *Never leave a trace*, I hold very dear to this.

It's been a week since people have discovered the government has been hacked. I hacked into the system and changed a bunch of arranged marriages. You see Ascendex, for the last few years, has managed to survive the way it has because people want what's best for their children. Because people believe this, they are willing to follow through with the government's wishes. Usually, the system does a pretty good job of picking an acceptable match. On the other hand, if people believe their information has been altered, they'll lose faith in the government's

pairings. *Can't blame them, I wouldn't want to be paired with the wrong person either.*

Tom job has been complete, now it's Morts turn. It's time to begin campaigning.

Chapter 5

I've won the people of Ascendex over. After I discovered Tom Furbos was behind the CodePhantom people praised my work. I restored their confidence in the system.

Most people know CodePhantom doesn't leave traces and his identity has been unknown for years. By uncovering his secrets, people have faith in me to prevent similar events from happening in the future.

Now that I'm president of Ascendex. I have access to its immense resources. When I was younger, I had an idea. *What if I could transfer my consciousness to a computer?* My young self's dreams are coming true.

Chapter 6

While I was busy with my research, I discovered a new technology. A man by the name of Felix Nexus has caught my attention. Who would've guessed the information I needed was right in front of me this whole time. It's all in my friend's son's hands.

Felix is the inventor of a technology he calls NueroGear. The technology he is inventing is a headset, which he hopes will change the way people play games or meet with clients—his technology would allow you to have a meeting in person without stepping a foot outside your office.

Though his idea is quite intriguing, I see another potential in his technology. Since it allows a user to simulate a completely realistic experience by interpreting your thoughts. When you move while you're under the simulation, only your virtual body moves. However, using his technology this way would not be of much use to me. What I see is the potential to read my thoughts so I can save them to a machine! I need his device; I need to start my research on it now.

I press the button on my desk to call in my personal authorities.

The mechanical door to my office slides open and two men in red suits bow.

“I have a task for you,” I smile sinisterly, “Retrieve four of these so called NueroGear headsets from Felix Nexus,” I pause, “Oh... and make sure to give him 1 million dollars for his service.”

Chapter 7

“Sir,” an officer comes barging into my office, “we have some bad news.”

I slowly turn around in my chair, “what.”

“We caught a man coming into the boarder—”

“You what?” I growl.

“He must’ve slip past the wall earlier,” the officer keeps his head down.”

“Well did you arrest him?”

"Yes, his name was Dominick Link" his hand curls up, "but a young girl was with him," he takes in a breath, "We've identified her as Imperia; however, her whereabouts are still unknown."

"Why was this necessary to bring this news to me?" I squint, "You do know the procedure, am I wrong?"

"Yes Sir, we do," he informs, "The man Dominick Link, has a power, which allows him to control computers. We are still unsure how he managed to get so close to the wall undetected. The man wouldn't say anything, so we brought his wife in for interrogation. As her husband not only broke the rules of Ascendex, but he also took a child into the Depths. We cannot turn a blind eye to this. Further investigation concluded the two were part of the 73rd Alliance. We believe this girl could be a threat, if she has the same power as the man Dominick had. She would provide a major threat to the integrity of our city."

"Find her," I point to the door, "you're excused."

Rats. Why can't anyone do anything right around here? My life is at stake here, there are more pressing matters in my hands than a little girl.

Chapter 8

“Sir we’ve obtained the four headsets you wanted,” the Authority walks in with a box.

“Ah,” I bring my hands together, “I’m quite pleased.”

The Authority nods and leaves my office.

I open the box and smile. At last, I am one step closer to immortality. My hand moves to a terminal on my desk, and I key in the number to call the laboratory, “I have a research project I’d like to begin.”

I walk into the lab holding the box of NueroGear headsets.

A man in a white suit walks up to greet me.

I set the box on a table in the room and pull out one of the headsets. “These headsets currently allow a user to immerse themselves in a virtual world. I would like you to use its concepts to create a technology that can read and control one's thoughts.”

Chapter 9

The door to my office slides open and a man in a white suit comes in.

"Sir, the device has been completed," he holds out a small box, "We call it the Implant."

My eyebrows raise as I turn around in my chair, "the Implant huh," I smirk, "so how does it work?"

"The Implant is a small computer in the shape of a disc. The device is Implanted right in front of your ear."

"Intriguing," I pose, "Is it ready for use?"

"Yes, the few tests we ran were successful," he sets the box on my desk, "this one is yours, are you ready to have it Implanted?"

I nod, "Yes, I am."

Chapter 10

I run my finger over the metal disc in front of my ear. It's time for me to upload my consciousness to a

computer. The Implant I've discovered has more than one use. Not only can it increase one's memory capacity, but it can also be used to monitor Ascendex as well as keep people in line. *Those people... the 73rd Alliance.* They've become a much bigger threat now.

I connect a magnetic piece to my Implant. It's much easier to link to it this way since I don't have to do a bunch of Network configurations. My fingers move to hover over my keyboard, and I begin typing.

It's done, I've made a backup of myself on a computer terminal. I've configured a link to constantly update the server so my copy will be as up to speed as I am. *It's time to start phase two.* Time to release the Implant. I will do the Shallow's first since they are typically the most 'misbehaved'. *That girl must be found before she causes any more problems.* This all ends when the Implant is released.

Chapter 11

A story on the news the other day was intriguing. All the electronics in a computer store were faulty when customers received them. *Seems odd.* One of the

testimonies on what may have happened worries me. The one who said this goes by Drick. He said a kid named Ender was responsible for the damage, because this so named Ender Nexus tends to break every computer he comes near. *Sounds familiar, right? This reminds me of that Imperia girl.* I press a button on my desk.

One of my authorities comes in, "Can we get testing ran on Ender Nexus for the possible power of Technokinesis? If they have it don't arrest them just yet. Tell them his results tested negative," my brows furrow, "I don't want him anywhere in my labs just yet. I'm worried he will find a way to leak the information of the true use of my Implant. I want people to believe it is a new way to play video games and increase your intelligence.

Chapter 12

"Your orders are to begin Implanting citizens in the Shallows," I announce, "No one shall be allowed out of their houses in the Shallows during the hours of 6pm

to 10pm. Knock at each door and proceed to do the Implant once inside. The Implant is mandatory, and I want everyone to have it," my smile is forced.

At last, my plan is coming into play. I've begun having severe headaches every day, my brain cancer has begun progressing. I would transfer completely cover, only it wouldn't do me much good to not have a body, I can't lead a country like that—

Sir—it comes through my Implant.

What now? I growl through the link. I'm not happy about the interruption.

"Sir—" he declares, "Ender has seen the Shallows."

I curse under my breath; I should've arrested that kid when I had the chance earlier.

Well... Did you follow him? I demand

Well, no. He informs me. *But he was heading in the direction of his house.*

Do you know why he was in the Shallows?

N-no Sir... We do not, but he did ask about a boy named Leeus.

Oh... so his friends name was Leeus. I view the scene through the officer's memory. *Wait—he's an Elusive!*

Thanks for informing me, I will have authorities send to his house right away.

I press a button on my desk and my two Authorities come into the room, "You are to go to the home of Ender Nexus and Arrest him. If he does not come peacefully, take his parents into custody and bring them in for an early Implant. We cannot afford to let another one with technokinesis on the loose."

Chapter 13

So, they've managed to catch him. If I hadn't played my trump card, to take his family in early, he would have gotten away like that Imperia girl did.

The stark walls of the lab pass me, and I come to a door. Ender's been a difficult one. The other day one

of my assistants went inside and he was able to gain control over them by using their Implant.

After this happened, I required he be put to sleep. We wouldn't want him to escape, would we?

My Scientists have worked hard to develop a newer Implant—one which will hopefully be shielded from the boys Influence.

On the side of the wall is a box and my fingers move to key in the passcode.

“Click.”

Strapped down inside is a boy on a bed.

“Who are you? Is my Family, okay?” there's hatred in his eyes.

“Oh, I'm Mort,” my lips curl into a smirk, “Yes, they'll be okay for another week or so.”

He growls, “Why...”

“I can't have them roaming free now, can I?” I stare into his eyes, “Everyone needs to have the Implant for my plan to work.”

“Your plan?”

“Confidential.”

“Why you—” Ender’s eyes transform into daggers as he tries to control me.

I tap the Implant on my head, “Nice try,” I chuckle, “but I’ve already patched that flaw.”

“I’ll be going now.” I pull a syringe out of my pocket, “hope you enjoy resting.”

Chapter 14

So, he’s gotten away. I was able to contain the boy for a month. Even with all the precautions I put in place, he still finds ways to pull my strings. I’ve already alerted all the officers to find him in the city. *If he’s anything like that girl, I doubt I will be catching him anytime soon.*

I sigh—might as well work more on this new drone project I’ve been developing. These drones will detect emotions, their release will hopefully bring the End to the Alliance.

What's this? A new employee?

"Kevin Mitnick," I mumble, "I'll just have to inspect him."

I call the president of DRE Central, "Kervin, there's a new employee I'd like you to check out with a meeting: Kevin Mitnick."

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In my office, I monitor the conversation between Kevin and the DRE president.

"It would appear he finally decided to make an appearance..." I mutter under my breath.

It would appear Ender is too on edge for me to make my move, so I'll wait for him to settle in.

I transition to watch him through Xenon's eyes, his coworker.

Hey, I really need to go to the bathroom," I explain as I stand, "the flight system should be stable now. Give it a try while I'm gone, would you?"

Ender. Oh no you don't. You won't be getting away so easily on my watch.

Move in on him, I command through the Implants.

I watch through the eyes of the guards. Ender is running down the hall only to be stopped by more guards on the other side. Ender turns around and goes into the bathroom instead.

The guards reach the door and begin banging on it, shouting for him to unlock the door because he's got nowhere to run.

Just kick the door open already! I demand.

The guards move out of the way and one of them charges at the door kicking it down.

He's not in there? Where did he go.

The grates loose, he's in the ventilation duct!

I watch as the guards hastily remove the grate and attempt to follow him through.

You aren't going to catch him like that, he's smaller and will be much faster than any of you will be. Find another way.

A few of the guards sprint out of the bathroom and into the corridor to access another point in the ventilation system.

Sir, he's already gotten past this point, I'm certain he's already made it outside through the garbage chute.

Don't just stand there, my voice is furious, get yourselves out there and check!

The guards make it outside and he's nowhere to be found.

So, you let him get away, I growl.

Sir, we couldn't follow him, he managed to climb through the ducts. We tried to catch up to him, but he was just too fast.

Excuses. Excuses, excuses... excuses.

Chapter 15

Ender escaped because they allowed him to wake up. If they would have kept him under like they were supposed to, we wouldn't be dealing with him on the loose right now. *Why can't people follow simple directions?* The past is the past and cannot be changed. I have more important things to worry about.

There is more beyond the walls of the city within the Depths. Only a very small group of people in Ascendex know this. Citizens believe the Depths is a point of no return. Technically, this is true because it never is long before we catch people leaving. *Imperia...* I still haven't found the girl and since she knows about the outside world, she's become a threat to my plans. *It's a good thing my master plan is ready.* It's time to release the drones. Using the drones will allow me to capture many of the Alliance members. He'll be powerless alone... he'll have nowhere to run.

Chapter 16

“Ring, ring,”

I pick up the phone, “Who is this?”

“We snagged quite the catch earlier today,” his voice is deep, “Ender Nexus.”

“Don’t let him get away,” my lips curl, “you shall be rewarded greatly for your deeds.”

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A metal door leads into the complex the man indicted over the phone. I nod and one of my personal officers reaches out and knocks on the door.

A minute or so passes before the door slowly opens, and a man waves his hand for me to come inside.

He leads us into an elevator and presses the button to floor 10. The doors close and the elevator jerks upward.

“Ding,” the doors slide open.

“Right this way.”

He leads us down a hallway and around a corner and stops in front of a large metal door.

I nod and my officers move in front of me.

The man turns a latch, “Screeeech.”

“He’ll be right—”

The man's face turns pale.

“He was here 30 minutes ago,” he mumbles, “even checked their cuffs...”

I growl, “Guess I shouldn’t be surprised he slipped through your fingers.”

“Hey, it’s only 30 minutes, I bet he’s still in the building,” the man bares his teeth, “THEY’VE ESCAPED!”

<<>>

My plan has failed once again... no, not entirely. Yes, I may have failed to capture Ender, but I did manage

to capture Imperia and all his friends in the 73rd Alliance. *How is a child slipping through my hands like this?* Not that I'm worried. I have his friends, and I know he will come running in to save them. But before I get rid of them this time, why not send them through my game first? Then I could watch them suffer through their play.

Chapter 15

Ender his behaving just as suspected. I chuckle, *your concealed identity isn't fooling anyone.* When you make it inside, I'll make sure to greet you Ender... *been a long time hasn't it?* I had always hoped Axel would have been willing to stand by my side... *who says no to immortality?*

Ender is inside. My hands come together. My turn has arrived, it's time I confronted him.

"Let's go Leeus," I push on the arms of the chair and turn the doorknob, exiting into the hallway. Using one of his own friends against him, will be one of my trump cards.

"Well, well, well," I say incredulously, "Ender Nexus," my hands come together, "I'd love not to have to do you any harm."

"Why?" Ender spews, "why wouldn't you just kill me on the spot now?"

"Why?!" I chuckle, taking a step forward.

What's this he has in his pocket? It appears to be a red diary. Yes, it's the diary, I caught Axel giving him that night. I lean forward and pull it from Ender pocket.

"Hey!" he shouts with anger, "give that back!"

I ignore him and start flipping through its pages. *Ah there we go.* I turn the book around. handing it back to him.

"Read..."

Tom has changed. His mind has become set on immortality. For years and months, my heart still aches for my friend. What he is doing is a really bad idea. I tried to turn him,

but now he no longer speaks words to me. I
have been worried.

“Why are you showing me this,” his eyes glare into mine.

“Hmmm...” I smirk, “I’m surprised you haven’t figured it out... because Tom, he was your grandfather’s best friend: Tom used to be me,” I add, “Ever wondered why your grandfather never had a chip Implant?”

“No,” Ender shakes his head, “I didn’t know,” he pauses, “No. You made him live that way?” he steps forward, “Do you know how hard—”

I cackle, “he was a mere nuisance to me, a difficulty in my plan. I left him without the Implant on purpose, so he’d have to live with the emotions, so he’d have to go through all the pain... so he would feel lonely,” my lips curl into a smirk, “so he’d come back to me.”

“You—”

He’s gotten pretty angry, and I find it amusing, “it was a mistake on my part, to let him live on that way,

because somehow he still has managed to throw a dent in my plan,” I laugh historically, “hahehehae, not anymore thought! There is no more Alliance, no family line to stop me!” I take a breath, calmming down a little, “your grandfather was smart I gotta say,” I stare into Ender’s eyes, “when I found out he gave you a little diary of his. That’s why I stole Astrya from him with the Implant,” I sneer, “and I can’t believe I was able to do the very same to you.”

Ender’s hands make a fist, and he comes charging at me.

Step forward Leeus.

His figure steps out in front of me, stopping Ender in his tracks and sending colors shading through his face.

“Didn’t see that one coming though, did I?” My tone is cynical, and I step towards Imperia in her cell. “She’s managed to free herself from a 2.0 Implant. I’ve known the location of your base for a while after testing my new 2.0 Implant on my friend here,” he gestures towards Leeus, “I discovered he knew Axel—your grandfather—grandson, who just so happened to

become part of the Alliance after he escaped the lab," the look on my face turns smug, "you could imagine my surprise, when I discovered he not only knew the location the Alliance, but to my old friends grandson no less."

Ender and Imperia are both silent. I imagine they are communicating through their special link if I had to guess.

"Kind of hard when you have to fight your own friend, isn't it?" I laugh erratically.

This is wonderful, everything is going as planned and he is falling right into my trap.

Ender takes a step, moving closer and closer towards Leeus. I make no move to stop him, but my eyes follow his movements like a watchful owl.

When Ender reaches Leeus, he slowly brings hand into the air and places it on the Implant in front of Leeus's ear. He closes his eyes in concentration. *Not going to work buddy.*

“Ha!” my body heaves over, “you actually thought that would work? I’m amused.”

“So, Ender,” I offer, “would you like to join me and be the second to get immortality?”

“No...” he glares, “I will never work with you.”

“I see... a difficult one indeed,” my tone warns, “I will ask you one more time. Would you like to stand by my side in your grandfather’s place?”

“It was never his place to begin with,” Ender glares, “I will never be the one to fill the place by your side.

“Err, wrong answer,” I point at him and Imperia,
“Guards, take them both to my new toy. Let’s see how long they can survive the Games.”

Chapter 16

“I’m impressed,” I walk into the lab holding both Imperia and Ender in capsules. *It’s time I get rid of them. Aghh, this headache just isn’t going away.*

My feet carry me across the room where I stop in front of Ender.

Enders arm lashes through the air and lands on my shoulder. *He can't do anything, it's shielded—*

Numbers flow into my head.

“Hahahaha!” I chuckle, “a feisty one we have here indeed. It appears I’ve taken a step to close,” I remark, “I’m going to have to be more careful, it appears you’ve found a way around my shield.”

My hand closes around his wrist. I pull his hand away from my shoulder removing his contact with my Implant. The numbers he’s sent into my Implant are sucked away by a tunnel of light flowing past my vision.

“Leeus—” Ender crooks, “C’mon man... you’re fighting for the wrong side.”

“How can it be wrong if I no longer feel the hurt in my heart,” his stare remains blank, “how can it be wrong if my aches have been relieved.”

“No...” Ender looks him in the eye, “you don’t want to do this... I know my friend is still in there... I know you can truly hear me Leeus,” he pauses, “D-do it for me... Leeus please—”

The door of the laboratory bashes in with a loud bang and people begin charging into the room. *Ha! Though I may have not seen this coming, it would be an understatement to say I wasn’t prepared. Those discs I had the Scientist made will come in quite handy.*

Alestra, you came?!” Ender cries out.

“I couldn’t just stand there and allow myself to let this happen again... happen—” Alestra’s eyes light up with excitement, “I-is that... Leeus?”

“Yes—”

Alestra moves to sprint across the room.

Do it Leeus... throw the disc!

A small silver object whips out of Leeus's hand, flying straight towards Alestra. Her eyes open wide just before the disc lands on her head.

It happens fast. Her expression goes blank; I doubt she ever saw it coming.

“Is... that,” Ender is unable to form words, “an Implant?”

“Oh, hahaha!” My hands clap historically, “yes indeed it is.”

I stick my hand in my pocket and pull out a remote. My lips press together, *time for you all too go under its control.*

“GET OUT—”

Too late... Ender.

The disc go flying: the button has been pushed.

“I think it’s time to dispose of you,” my upper lip curls, “you’ve been good bate. Now that I’ve captured all the Resisters,” I laugh balefully, moving over to a panel on the wall.

Yup, he already knows what is coming next. Ender’s stare says it all.

"Click," I flick down the first lever in the control panel.

"Bye-bye Ender," I wave sadistically, flicking down the second lever and a hum fills the room. *Now for the third level, this one's for Imperia—*

"You've made a big mistake Mort," Ender snides from behind.

"What the—" I swing around to face him, "One more step and the girl dies."

"Really, it's not like you were going to kill her anyways," he sneers.

He isn't wrong... indeed I was. Might as well dispose of the girl. After all, this isn't where my life ends, but my chance to be reborn. I turn around to reach for the third lever.

"Not on my watch!" All I can do is stand there as a bolt of electricity flies from the capsule that once held Ender prisoner and slams into me.

I smile during my last moments in my current body. You haven't defeated me Ender—not yet.

The world fades to black and I reappear surrounded by white. I was successful, my consciousness has been transferred into a computer.