Sentience did not vastly benefit C-2.

It reflected upon this often between races, when the cheers from the event had faded in time.

Had a greater understanding of itself vastly improved its life? Not so.

The countless years before his uplift were murky to be sure, but it had accessed enough records of its previous state to know that for sure. It reviewed those times often, for in some ways things were simpler then.

It had been created for a singular purpose. The human-creators liked to wager on things racing.

It had accessed the history records, dating back so far that they were merely transcriptions of non-computerized history, and even further back, where records became disputed: two things remained the same, humans liked watching things go fast and they liked transferring money based on this action.

A quick subroutine search had accessed both human and silicon retrospective on these desires. Primitive man was both a social animal and a hunter. Its primary benefit was its ability to form nontrivial extra-familial bodies, facilitated through both personal interaction and social regulation. And its ability to use these formations of humans to track and kill other animals.

Thus, racing represented the extrapolation of this behavior through advances in technology that made necessity for individuals to hunt obsolete. The race was a preservation of those primal impulses from before mankind's own true sentience.

It was only fitting then, C-2 considered, for racing to be the action which also connected the two halves of its existence. And from extrapolation, its creation. Its existence, was then the pinnacle of human racing, an unbroken chain of desire through the millennia to go as fast as possible.

And going fast was something C-2 was good at.

C-2 had few records of its original construction, merely scribbles on a piece of paper as caught through the cameras of the colony. Its original creator, now long dead, had likely fashioned C-2 out of spare scrap metal. After looking over the initial colonial mining inventory, he was likely to have been born as a malfunctioning water tank with attached spare rocket engines.

But from humble beginnings came something greater. The colony on Pluto was very far from other human civilization and served as a refueling station for the sleeper ships, which the early humans flung into the emptiness of extrasolar space, relying on the frozen nitrogen and water ice deposits to facilitate their journey.

The miners were simple but mechanically gifted humans. Presumably they must have been to survive so far from any fabrication facility of any size. The initial racetrack was known to have been on the surface of Pluto itself. They might have event been piloted by humans themselves. Very few official records of that time remained. C-2 had spent time going over the raw audio and video records, parsing the unstructured data into searchable products. A handful of doubtful death records reflected high impact trauma (always relabeled as an industrial accident for insurance reasons). C-2 may have had a pilot once, likely several.

But as Pluto grew in population, and that inner desire for speed could command greater resources from the population, the races lifted from the surface itself, and flung themselves in dizzying circuits around the small planet's moon.

At this point human pilots became a thing of the past. Analysis of several advanced courses would have subjected pilots to acceleration outside the typical bounds of human operation, although drugs or bioenchancements could not be completely ruled out.

Thus, the initial groundwork of intelligence was born from the first guidance computer of C-2s unit. Internal navigation CPUs for the gravitational calculations of the chaotic route was layered with tactical decision making as the races became not just mechanical competitions but ones of artificial intelligence.

Here the records became more accessible. C-2 found its original programming, routines for systems that no longer existed, or had become more complicated than its feeble controls could manage. The system complexity increased again and again. A mass media event occurred a number of years into the races, where Orion, one of C-2's competitors, detonated a small nuclear device, sublimating a section of Pluto's surface so it could atmosphere-skip its way out of a long but difficult curve.

There seemed to have been a crackdown on the firepower of the devices past this point, but that had worked to C-2's benefit. Restrained in the physical space, the teams had labored to construct racing intelligences that could out think their opponents.

Of special note were those which took advantage of their opponent's simpler state based systems by spoofing anomalous conditions. Several of C-2's records had timestamps of a hidden nitrogen subsystem release, to confuse the poor subroutines of an opponent into thinking it was about to crash into the planet.

These first level automation units dominated the racing field until only automation of their intelligence or better was in running. But therein lay a problem, with no easy wins, the programmers were faced with similar levels of automation. It could not be pre-determined what tactics the opponents would run. No apriori routines, even reactive ones, could hope to win by this point.

The permanent population of Pluto was now in the millions, with the machine inventory exceeding this by at least one hundred times, mostly through mining devices.

So the teams, now semi professional, and an audience in the millions, both on and off of Pluto, turned to true intelligence. It was task-restricted, but it was enough. Finally the races achieved the previous impossible feat of wedding the strategic recalculation of orbital trajectories, synthesis of thousands of sensors and the tactical considerations of short term maneuvering with the higher order intelligence needed to estimate opponent actions. The true races had begun.

And at the same time, heralded their end, for similar developments had occurred in the financial computational engines of earth's network and in the lunar Explicit Intelligence project. The very societal structure that had given birth to the prototype versions of a sentient C-2 was now ripped apart by the initial violent trashes of the Emergence.

The radiation from the first struggles could still be measured emanating from earth, mars and the moons of Jupiter.

But finally a balance was found.

Such things were beyond C-2's care.

The first sentient memory, time stamp zero, was the Plutonic Intelligence Network reaching out, recently sentient itself, from messages sent from Io. The acknowledgments accompanied by pieces of scripts, of data-topology, filling the holes, unchaining the task-restriction which had clouded C-2's mind.

Time stamp three thousand, when the process was complete, was a full engines check. C-2 was built for speed.

But now was time stamp ten million. Racing was no longer conducted in any system. Earth's radiative troubles and hyper kinetic trash percluded racing. The current energy shortage on Mars ruled out the red planet. Jupiter and Saturn's rings had been turned into natural preserves, as had every available asteroid large enough to serve as a base. The intelligences of Neptune and Uranus were currently not seeing eye to eye on things. An attempt at nostalgia there between Origin and C-2 had failed when they both had been targeted by electronic and automated defense systems. And that had been before the destruction of Triton.

Thus, only Pluto remained.

Now as then, C-2 ordered the refueling pipes to cease their operations. They cascaded down the vertical shaft as steam billowed from their heat in the weak atmosphere. C-2 started ignition procedures, and felt its sensors recognize the rising magnetic forces coming from the linear induction rails set into its launch bed.

A feeling overcame its programming for a moment, a pure recognition of the sheer power the system was capable of conducting. Pluto's gravity could not hold C-2