**This is the tentative start to a lengthy story I am planning to write. This will be a long-term personal project of mine and I hope to, someday, publish my final edition.**

The sky is a black, fiery haze. Lingering ash casts a permanent shadow across the land. Green pastures and lush forests have withered and died in darkness. Cities, once glorious in a different time, are indistinguishable - piles of burning rubble, endless fields of debris and wreckage. The poison in the air, though unseen, is felt, weakening our bodies, dulling our minds.

Even as I write, I wonder, for whom and why? Perhaps it is my final act of contrition, to record man’s sins and demise and admit, finally, that we were wrong.

As I stare into the eyes of others, I see the same guilt and desolation that surely must reflect in mine. For we are gathered here, dozens of the most brilliant men and women of our time. We were sheltered, protected underground, allowed to experiment beyond ethics in the name of duty. We were the minds behind the weapons that ravaged the earth.

In the past, we may have warred and battled, senseless soldiers in a world divided. But the civilizations we held dear have crumbled; the nationalities we swore our lives to are dead.

So here we stand, gathered under the towering roof of one of the few remaining FSP-1 complexes in the world. Four shining white walls enclose a massive room lined with whirring and intricate equipment. In the centre lies a cubicle, a diminutive box in the presence of such grandeur, yet strangely centric to the whole design. The building itself is surrounded by eight-inch thick lead plates. Each entrance holds a vacuumed chamber flooded with sterilizing chemicals, the system only allowing entry upon a successful contamination scan. The air within is completely purified – cycled from the outside every two minutes through a complex labyrinth of filters and disinfectants. Nothing is left to chance. Even in the face of our demise, it is hard not to admire the diligent handiwork of man.

This building is a fortress, the safest one above surface, but will prolong our lives no longer than two weeks. Water can be recycled, but food is unsustainable. The shielding may hold, but the atmosphere is filled with too much poison, too many particles seeking to tear apart our bodily functions for it to last.

But this does not trouble us. We have assembled from every corner of the globe not to prolong our existence in self-interest, but to partake in our final act of redemption, a penance for our sins.

It is science that has doomed us; science that shall redeem us.

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The black box fell slowly from the sky. Its red light flashed, a beacon for the watchful eye.

Out of the shadows, a boy emerged. He was not tall, perhaps thin for his age, but his hands were coarse and his eyes fierce and threatening. He approached carefully, crouched against the wall, barely visible against the backdrop of the dimly-lit alley. Long had he awaited this moment.

He took a step and stopped. He was not alone. The soft patter of stifled footsteps might have deceived an ordinary man, but the all-too familiar sound put the boy on alert. He fixed his gaze on the entrance to the alley and his heart sank as a figure rounded the corner.