# Futile

# Chapter 1

Ladies and Gentlemen, how can one man accidentally destroy a million worlds? I had help. Those countless deaths are ultimately on my shoulders, but many other people share the blame, as you will see. Please hear my story and heed my warning. I do not want to add your deaths to my growing list.

Blame my college professors for teaching me to be a computer genius. Without their teaching, I could never have developed such a perfect computer virus. Blame my college roommate for doubting my programming ability, and blame him for daring me to put my virus on a lab computer. I remember sitting in Dean Ray’s office the next week trying to deny my involvement.

“Your virus has single-handedly crippled every computer system on campus.”

“But I didn’t do it.”

“Grades and student records – all gone. You were lucky our network administrator disconnected us from the Internet in time. Who knows what damage you might have been libel for had that virus escaped. As it is, we are shutting down the entire campus for a month to clean up the mess. Do you have any idea how much trouble you have created here? You are lucky we are only kicking you out of school.”

“I tell you, Dean, I didn’t do it.”

Dean Ray reached in his desk, pulled out a laptop computer, and handed it to me.

“Do you recognize this machine, Henry?”

It was my dorm computer. As the Dean took it back and turned it on, it dawned on me; my roommate must have ratted me out. I wonder how much reward he got.

“This is your computer, and here is the source file for a virus program – you wrote this code, didn’t you? It has your name proudly in the comments.”

I just sat there planning my ex-roommate’s death.

“Let’s run the code, shall we?” he asked adding sarcastically “I hope you don’t have anything important here …”

He started my virus and turned the screen to me. The screen cleared as the virus did its magic.

The virus had the simplest of goals: take over the computer and spread to other systems. I waited in silence knowing what was going on behind the blank screen. The virus probed the hardware determining how to use the computer’s resources. Then it tried spreading through all inter-connections. Finally, it wiped the computer clean.

The dorm computer was not very sophisticated, and it put up no fight for the world’s smartest computer virus. It took only a few seconds for the virus to confiscate the machine, and then it printed its call sign on the screen in bold, black letters.

I sat there, Ladies and Gentlemen, staring at those three words. I used to be proud of the message – the signature of my own handiwork. Now that phrase sends chills down my spine.

How about blaming that cab driver for knowing a short cut through traffic? If he hadn’t gotten me to my sister’s office twenty minutes before our dinner date, the virus would never have gotten out.

“Just make yourself at home, Henry. I’ve got to go to a meeting before we eat.” What she meant was that I would have to wait for my lecture on getting into another school. It would be followed up with a lecture on being more responsible. It was the same old lecture she had given me all my life.

I spent the time surfing the Internet on her office computer. I browsed through her company’s standard advertising pages. The standard animation included a black satellite circling a green globe. The faces of several wireless phone customers appeared – laughing and talking.

As the ad continued, a spider wearing the company logo spun a red web over the entire surface of the planet. The company was one of the top contributors to the growth of the Internet turning their satellites from voice carriers to data carriers.

Blame our society for getting so tangled up in technology. Very few people on the planet had a firm grasp of exactly how things worked, yet we had become so dependent on the Internet that everyday life revolved around online services. When you think about it, people had willingly given up their lives to the Internet and thus they had asked to be slaves of my virus. Right?

I sat there watching the advertisement for the company products. Phones and computers had become smaller and smaller until they were actually implanted directly into the brain. People could surf the web with their thoughts instead of their computers. I watched a beautiful lady in the ad lift her eyes and smile as a bubble appeared above her head. Her message to her lover appeared in the bubble, and then his face appeared as the thought-originated email arrived in his brain. There they both sat, smiling. How sickening could it get?

Much sicker. The company enhanced the brain-extension technology with an entire line of artificial eyes and ears. People were actually choosing to have their own body parts removed to get newer models with better performance. A hyper-link appeared on the ad. Just click here to get in line at the company-acquired hospital for extension surgery. The waiting list was a month long.

Finally, the ad closed with a description of future products being beta tested within the company. Is your IQ lower than you would like? The LaGracor Corporation will soon offer brain extensions to boost your mental capacity. Do you have trouble concentrating? Do you lack the proper self-determination and motivation to succeed in your career? You could get ahead in life if only you could set your mind to it? Soon you will be able to set your mind firmly to it – whatever “it” is – with our new MOTIVATOR product. Simply program in the goals you want to focus on, and the MOTIVATOR in your brain will keep your subconscious driving to completion.

I tell you Ladies and Gentlemen; it was a fire waiting to happen. I just happened to be the unlucky one who dropped the match. And I dropped the match that very afternoon in my sister’s office.

I closed the ad and marveled at her office computer. It was a state-of-the art machine unlike any I had ever seen. If ever there was a challenge for my virus, this was it. I logged into my home computer and pulled the virus down. I remember the surge of adrenaline as I pressed enter. It sickens me now. I had no way of knowing that that very moment marked the beginning of the end of life as I had known it.

The machine whirled normally for a moment. Then the screen went black. Then those three words, that infamous phrase that will haunt me the rest of my life, flashed before my eyes. I quickly turned off the computer before the virus could spread and sat down on the desk smiling to myself. Pride, Ladies and Gentlemen. I was proud of the monster I had created. I was still smiling when my sister opened the door and waved me out.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. Let’s get out of here – I’m starved!”

Whenever my sister gave me an extra good talk, she always took me to the Coleman House – a very exclusive restaurant near our mom’s home. We sat there over salads oblivious to the destruction taking place back at her office. I tell you Ladies and Gentlemen, the clown that designed the network security for my sister’s company should get most of the blame. No computer virus, not even the world’s greatest virus, should have been able to spread like mine did.

“Martha, are you OK? You seem preoccupied.”

“Not really. Just motivated. I was thinking over some advertising strategies our team is presenting next week to the vice president.”

“Don’t you ever stop working? You look tired. Does that motivator in your head keep you from sleeping?”

“I sleep fine, Henry.” She glared defensively. “And how about you? Perhaps you could use a little motivation, huh? Get into another school and buckle down – use your talents for good this time?”

“Ah. I was hoping you were going to save the speech for dessert.”

“Putting it off till later. That’s always been your answer. You are so bright, and …”

My sister turned her head with a puzzled look.

“What is it?”

“I don’t know.” She spoke now in slow, soft tones. “I have my computer desktop forwarded to my brain extension when I am out of the office. Everything is frozen – no stock reports, no … wait a second. No, I can’t reach anything in the company at all.”

“It’s probably just a temporary glitch in the lines. Don’t worry, your umbilical cord will be back up soon!”

But I found out soon enough that it wasn’t a glitch. My virus had just broken through the security system and taken over the five thousand some-odd computers that comprised the company network. In a matter of minutes, the company was paralyzed as the virus figured out how to use the equipment to spread itself. The virus tried the standard routers to the Internet but found the global network security much tighter.

The virus found the company databases and neural-nets and expert-systems: the largest store house of brain-extension technology on the planet. But the knowledge meant nothing to the dumb virus; it was simply learning how to use whatever hardware it found trying to infect the rest of the world.

It tried all of the computers on the company network until it encountered one very strange computer. It had no way of knowing that the computer was really a motivational implant inside the brain of an engineer working late night in the lab. It spent a few minutes learning the technology, and then the engineer and everyone else in the building with a motivator received a new programmed goal.

Those poor unsuspecting people! They had placed motivators inside their brains and connected their minds to the Internet to advance their careers. But instead of being enslaved by their work, they became enslaved by the goals of a computer virus. They were still normal men and women, but their sense of right and wrong had become muddled by the artificial drive to spread a computer virus. It suddenly became their life’s work.

The president of the company called a special meeting that very night. He ripped down old charts in the war room and focused the team leaders on one problem – how to infest the entire world with the virus. There were lots of ideas presented, and no one gave a second thought to “why” they were doing what they were doing. My virus was the “why”; they were just supplying the “how”.

Their first action was to purge the virus from the company computers. The network would soon go into overtime as engineers, artificially motivated, designed better and better brain extensions, which would in turn spread the motivation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I remember the very moment the company computer came back online. I remember the very instant the recall went out to everyone on the Internet who owned a motivator. We were still sitting in the restaurant barely an hour after the network had gone down. My sister, along with all the other victims, received a new priority in life. She quickly stood from the table, dropped her napkin, and glared at me with fire in her eyes. And then she cut through my heart by uttering that three-word phrase – the menacing message I had coded into my computer. The virus had mutated from an executing computer program to an artificial motivation. The message had mutated from printed letters to verbal form.

“Henry Borg, resistance is futile!” She said and stormed out of the restaurant.

# Chapter 2

“And in the local news, four teenagers staged an elaborate hoax at Northwind Hospital this afternoon. Mike Daniels has the story.”

I propped my feet up on a crate of potato chips and watched the news cast from the basement of my mom’s lake house. Before my dad died, he had turned the summer home into a survival shelter of sorts predicting that the final war was coming. I’m sure he rolled over in his grave when he learned that I started it.

“Thanks Georgia. Several people witnessed what appeared to be an abduction at Northwind this afternoon. Two young boys ran out of the hospital screaming for help. Two doctors followed quickly behind and subdued the boys with anesthesia masks. The doctors then pulled the boys back into the hospital. Police searched the hospital a short time later and discovered four teenage boys, two wearing doctor’s coats, hiding in a janitorial closet. The boys promptly confessed to the hoax and apologized to the disturbed witnesses. No charges have been filed.”

Northwind hospital was the hospital run by my sister’s company. There were other hospitals around the world that performed brain extension implants, but Northwind was the leader. They boasted that they could perform implant surgery in under ten minutes. At first, the doctors with motivators teamed together to assimilate the remaining doctoral staff. Then the entire hospital staff – all four shifts – was forced into brain surgery. Patients, visitors, anyone who walked into the hospital was quickly enslaved. Ambulances went into overtime abducting people right off the streets. The police investigated eyewitness reports only to be assimilated along with the rest of the local government. News agencies were assimilated, and false stories kept the viral spread under wraps. Entire cities were being enslaved right under the noses of the national governments.

I lived in that basement for a week eating dried foods and drinking bottled water. Surely the federal government would discover the virus and unite with other nations to fight back. I watched the news for any report until Friday night when the President made a special speech to the entire world.

“People of Tenmaria. I am pleased to announce that the Borg computer virus, which devastated our planet over the past week, has now been eliminated. Using a counter-virus on the Internet, we have been able to completely neutralize the motivational implants that have enslaved our people. Many of you have seen loved ones taken by the virus. Most of you have today been freed from your slavery. All of us must carry the horrible memories with us through whatever life we can piece back together; but there is a good lesson to be learned from the pain. We have become too dependent on the Internet, and we have exposed our brains to the whims of technology. We will undo these mistakes in the years to come.

“Local governments have established clean-zones in all major cities. Hospitals that yesterday enslaved us will be working around the clock to remove our implants. Freed individuals will be given an electronic tattoo on the palm like this one that will signify their freedom from the virus. Those without the mark will be arrested and cleansed – we must not allow this horrible week to be repeated. So, I urge you to find the nearest clean-zone as soon as you can. Local directions will be given after this announcement. We have already seen what we as a planet can do if we work together on a common goal. Let us now work together for our common good.”

I was taken in, Ladies and Gentlemen. I bought the lie completely. My own virus had baited me with a devious plan, and I swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. Most of the other freebies bought it too. Only a small percentage of the Tenmarian population escaped that rouse.

I met up with my sister who stood in line with me at the hospital. She went in first and returned pretending to feel better without the implant. She even pretended to be worried about how the tattoo made her look. I went in for my mandatory scan and came out with a shiny new motivator implant rubbing against the caudate nucleus on the bottom of my brain.

# Chapter 3

Blame the Gordan home world for not heeding the warning. In the end, the warning sent by the Resistance made it possible for us, the Borg, to escape our planetary confines. Ironic that the Resistance should share the blame...

I accepted an office next to my sister and began working diligently with the motivator design team. Our primary job was to improve Internet access allowing our collective to share thoughts faster and more completely. I tell you Ladies and Gentlemen, I worked harder those three months than ever before and never since.

There were still pockets of what we called resistance, but their numbers were shrinking daily. Their problem was that they couldn’t band together to form a unified plan; as soon as one rebel was assimilated, he would lead the collective straight to the hideouts and arsenals of his cohorts. We had the weapons of the entire planet at our disposal, and we had sheer numbers. We simply waited for terrorists to appear and then assimilated them. We continued to move forward improving the brain implants and the Internet that linked us all together.

In a last-ditch effort, the Resistance seized control of a satellite and turned it to broadcast a message into space.

“A deadly computer virus has infected the people of our planet. Our people are enslaved. Please destroy our devastated world and free our souls.”

Was it curiosity that brought the Gordans to our planet? Were they really bent on trying to help us? They landed in the capitol city of our nation barely a year after the warning was sent into space. Three green ships glistened in the morning sun as the President strolled out to shake hands with the five representatives from the Gordan home world.

A crowd had gathered around the ships pretending to be afraid. A silent signal was given, and the crowd suddenly turned into a silent mob swarming in around the landing party. The Gordan ships opened fire with weapons we had never seen. Blue streaks of energy killed hundreds of drones, but in the end, we abducted the Gordan landing party and raced them to our top research facility.

Then we poured as much of our military firepower on the ships as we could muster. Tanks, planes, bombs, missiles, suicide runs – you name it, we threw it at them. But the Gordan technology was considerable. They slipped above the mayhem and back into orbit largely unscathed.

What happened next was probably the virus’s darkest moment. The entire planet focused on the Gordan physiology. We killed one Gordan in front of his companions and removed his brain. We were going to learn how their brains worked either by exploratory surgery or by direct information – the remaining four Gordans chose to give us the information to avoid dissection. We started work on a motivator that would work on a Gordan.

We accidentally killed two of the remaining Gordans with our modified brain implants. The third suffered enough brain damage to be useless, but the fourth survived and became the first non-Tenmarian to join the collective.

Our new brother gave us a crash course in Gordan technology. Manufacturing around the world turned to the production of advanced weapons and shields – the things we would need to fight the Gordan fleet massing in orbit above us. My team began adding Gordan technology to our implant designs and Internet connections to make a stronger hive.

Ten days after their initial landing, the Gordans were still in orbit looking down on us trying to figure out what to do. They were caught by surprise when we launched two thousand missiles bearing Gordan propulsion and Gordan warheads. With some quick reactions and good concentration, they were able to fend off the attack. We knew they would, but we only needed a diversion. The Gordans were so busy dodging missiles that they didn’t notice the tiny four-man vessel slipping away from Tenmaria.

The vessel was barely space-worthy, slapped together in a week from specs on a Gordan shuttlecraft. It carried four drones and considerable research/manufacturing facilities and just enough fuel to make one landing at its secret destination. And no one on Tenmaria knew the destination.

I remember being ever so tired, Ladies and Gentlemen. We all were. The voice in my head that afternoon and the new motivation were nothing less than a call from God to come to Heaven.

“Come here and go to sleep.” The voice said and kept repeating.

The web browser in my brain became locked on the picture of a Gordan ship sitting in the middle of a grassy field. Hundreds of people lay on the grass in front of the ship. They were all sleeping.

“I think it’s on the farmlands south of the city.” My sister burst into my office.

“That’s what I was thinking. Want me to drive?” I asked.

“Yeah, but we should avoid the toll-way. Everyone else will be going that way. Well, come on … quit wasting time! Let’s go get some sleep!”

And just like that, every person on the planet put down his or her work on the virus and headed for one of the thousand Gordan ships that had landed on Tenmaria. The Gordans had been studying the transmissions on our global Internet, and they used our own network against us. Using the same technique that the virus used to spread motivational tasks to the drones, the Gordans erased the viral motivation and sent out a new command. They established “drone-free” perimeters around their ships and began removing the implants. As people were freed, they joined the cleanup effort. Drones quietly lined up around the ships and went to sleep on the ground. When we woke up, we were left with our own desires – and our own horrible memories.

Our civilization was in ruins, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thousands of people had been killed in spreading my virus. All of our manufacturing facilities had been re-fitted for Borg purposes. We had stolen the Gordan technology, which was now part of us, and the Gordans committed to help us temper the technology with their experience. The uniqueness of our planet – whatever surprises we might have discovered on our own – had been destroyed by my virus. I had destroyed the centuries-developed culture of an entire planet, Ladies and Gentlemen. Can any of you relate to that? There was no punishment for the crime I had committed, but I could no longer live on Tenmaria. The Gordans offered me sanctuary on their home world, and I gladly took it.

A brief demonstration, Ladies and Gentlemen, on the power of geometric progression. Take this penny of Tenmarian currency and put it in your hand. Tomorrow I’ll double the money in your hand to two pennies. The next day, I’ll double it again to four pennies and then eight and so on. At the end of a month, you’ll have a million dollars. The pot starts out small, but as your collection gets larger, it expands rapidly.

So, it was with that tiny Borg seedpod. The Gordans had cataloged thousands of inhabited worlds at various stages of development. The pod had severed its link from the Tenmarian collective shortly after take-off. Then the crew had selected a random, primitive world, and set sail. Nobody on Tenmaria would know where it was going. We knew only that it was out there, and the Gordans began a futile search.

The first primitive world offered no technological resistance for my virus. In fact, the technology was almost too underdeveloped. The virus struggled on the Haltic world for two years just to establish a global Internet and to build modern manufacturing facilities. Then the Borg fleet of twenty ships tackled a slightly more advanced world adding a billion more drones – more work hands and more engineers. Another year crept by, but things began progressing rapidly.

Eight more worlds quickly fell to the Borg virus in the next six months. They all began producing ships and weapons and motivators based on the stolen Gordan technology. Countless engineers turned their efforts to improving on the Gordan technology. By the fifth year, the Borg collective was ten times the size of the Gordan population, and the Borg fleet was twenty times as large as the Gordan armada with weapons and capabilities no Gordan had ever seen.

I watched the news reports when the Borg returned first to Tenmaria. The planet was recaptured that very day. This time the virus employed no trickery. It simply landed on Tenmaria and swallowed the people one by one. There was no struggle, and no negotiating.

The Borg drones had taken on a whole new look. The need for individual thinking had greatly diminished, and the new motivational implants turned the drones into mere puppets of a collective conscious. All individuality was lost. New drones were given prosthetic limbs and senses to enhance their service to the Borg.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wasted no time. I borrowed a shuttlecraft from my Gordan hosts while they prepared to fight off the Borg invasion. I tried to tell them they were wasting their time, but they were a stubborn people – I have encountered other, more stubborn people along my midnight ride. Like the Gordans, they too are now Borg. I have spent the past ten years of my life running as fast as I could, getting a better ship where I could, spreading the warning to all who would hear.

So here I am, Ladies and Gentlemen. I stand before you as Father of the Borg. Blame me and curse me if you like, but please believe me; the storm is coming. My demon-child is close on my heels. Gather your loved ones and your belongings and run. Don’t try and fight – just run and spread the warning to all you meet. Warn them that indeed resistance is futile.