



THE MACHINE OF FLESH

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Acknowledgments

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Thank you once again for helping me throughout life. This time around, we are exponentially accelerating into a technological revolution

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Chapter One: The Glory of the Reich

The sun gleamed onto Hitler's face that morning in April. There I was, in the front row of the square in Berlin. Hitler was in the Reich Chancellery balcony above the square and from such a short distance, I could see the conviction in the Führer's expressions. That morning was like the beginning of any week in modern day Germany. The Führer was to speak to the people today about the excellence of the Reich. He went to the edge of the balcony and greeted the people.

The people hailed Hitler and saluted him.

"Sieg Heil!" They chanted. They saluted and chanted for a minute and a half. Hitler stroked his hair and spoke into the microphone near the edge of the balcony.

"People of Germany, today is a new day. Ever since the trials of the Second World War, we have risen above the challenges the world has levied against us. They said that Germany would not succeed and we did. Today, we are the sole power in the world. We succeeded in establishing totalizing control in every country across the planet. It is because of the will of Germany that we triumphed. Every square centimeter of land is inhabited by the master race."

The crowds roared in applause and chants. Throughout his initial words, Hitler exasperated his gestures and exaggerated his hand movements like he usually did. He made gestures of fists and spoke out to the sky as if he were commanding the wrath of God himself. After the crowds settled down, Hitler spoke again.

"In our current year, 2055, we have triumphed beyond nature. All of the master race has become immortal and lives glorious lives. The people have shelter, food, technology and are united under the blood red flag of the Reich. Today, I proclaim that the thousand year Reich will become the immortal Reich of mankind! Today, the people of Germany have risen!"

The crowd went wild again and I was blushing red in the face myself. Hitler knew how to get all of our emotions running wild. The crowd yelled

"Heil Hitler! For Germany! Heil Hitler! For Germany!" The chanting continued for a minute and from the balcony, Hitler was smiling. Hitler finished the morning rally with fiery rhetoric.

"I call out to all of you to materialize the Reich's will. We will head out into the Milky Way carrying the flag of Nazi Germany, spreading our ideas across the galaxy. We are not far off from that future and we shall succeed. I bid you farewell. Seize the day. For Nazi Germany!"

Hitler saluted to the crowd of ten thousand people and they saluted back. They chanted until Hitler left the Chancellery balcony and the people in the crowd began dispersing. My fellow SS officers and I remained in the front row to watch the crowds leave. My subordinate captain, Adalbert Braun asked me

“Major Schriever, shall we head to a restaurant to grab a meal for lunch? We have some time before we must report back to duty. Today is not a busy day, I'm sure the paperwork can wait. And your wife, Hannah? Is she in the crowd with us?”

I thought to myself how nice it would be to enjoy a meal with my Captain and possibly bring my wife as well. I accepted.

“Yes Captain Braun, let us have lunch immediately. My wife is in the crowd. She should be making her way to me soon. Where shall we have lunch? Anything in particular which you're thinking about eating?”

Adalbert smiled and tapped his belly with his hands. He then said,

“The Huntsman's Lounge has the finest selection of meats and beer. They have rodizio there, an untermensch type of service where the steakhouse has servants who bring you select cuts of meat. Other food is served as well, carbohydrates like rice and french fries as well. It should be good I think, I know you are a devout connoisseur of meat Heinrich.”

As the crowds began dispersing, my wife came to Braun and I. I then said to Braun,

“I've never had rodizio. What is that, some type of Spanish thing?”

“No, it was formerly a Portuguese and Brazilian type of cuisine. As you know, one of the many white cultures of the world which the Reich has conquered and were reappropriated as our own, in some diminished capacity. They are still untermensch Heinrich. We never had many problems with the Portuguese, so we let the pure Portuguese keep some semblance of their culture. Well, the ones that survived anyway,” said Adalbert.

My wife came up to the captain and I. As the sun shined down on her I could see the reflection of the light in her gray eyes. I stood there amazed that I was once married to a beautiful woman like her. Her hair flowed into long golden wavy locks. She was petite but quite endowed with a body with curves. In her red and black dirndl dress, I could see her breasts bulging out and I struggled to maintain my composure and not get an erection.

Her skin was fair and her teeth pearly white. She had quite the feminine jawline and perfectly proportioned anatomy. She was a child of the fourth generation after the Second World War. She was a perfect designer human, like I was. We were pure, I thought to myself. We were pure in Hitler's eyes and that's all that mattered. As far as the state was concerned. I, I could not entirely defend the Reich in its entirety.

She smiled at me, Captain Braun and said

“Hello gentlemen. What are you two fine men going to do before you get back to work? Shall we get something to eat? I have so much housework to do my dear Heinrich, I know you don't like an unruly home.”

“We were just talking about heading to The Huntsman's Lounge for lunch. The work isn't piling up today, Captain Braun suggested we have the rodizio for lunch. It should take no less than an hour and a half, I am sure they have their meats cooking throughout the day, do they not Adalbert?” I said.

“Yes Captain Schriever, the meats are cooking throughout the day. Let's make our way to the lounge and enjoy a nice meal.” Said Lieutenant Braun.

I hailed for a taxi for the three of us to take us further down Wilhelmstraße 77, where The Huntsman's Lounge was. On Wilhelmstraße 77 I saw the people of Berlin merry and going about their business, living in a timeless state of happiness, or so I believed. I could only see smiles on their faces and believed they were content with life. I could have never been more wrong in my life. I held my wife's hand in the back seat of the taxi and she looked at me smiling. She moved closer to me and said

“I love you Heinrich. You know how much you mean to me.”

She grabbed my face and I went in to kiss her. Her lips were smooth and moist, from the top of her lip I could smell a faint scent of strawberries. She turned me on and I tried my hardest to not get an erection knowing we would be at the lounge soon. I looked out of the window as we made our way down the boulevard. My wife was stroking her hand on mine and I felt her soft skin. She made me feel warm and loved, she was always caring and mindful of the stress of my work.

I saw Captain Braun look at me through the rearview mirror of the taxi and then quickly glance away. I knew he envied the loving relationship I had with my wife. I could see in his eyes day to day the stress of the life he lived. Before joining the Schutzstaffel, Captain Braun made his way through the Wehrmacht as a lowly enlisted soldier. He fought on the front lines of the final days of extermination and conquest in the aboriginal Australian outback. The tribes people had secretly armed themselves to fight to the death against the Nazis in order to save their heritage. That war, many years after World War II, was the final consolidation of planet Earth under the control of Germany.

He always wanted to find love but never could. He had an illegitimate son, Lucien, with another untermensch some time ago. Adalbert's face held tell tale signs of a natural birth in the untermensch. He had a fat nose and a bit of asymmetrical features. Still, he was white and allowed to live amongst the rest of the designer people of the Reich. As much as the Allies once criticized the brutality of Germany, it still liberalized over time. There was some freedom for the remaining white people of Earth, no matter what their background was.

Braun wanted my wife and I knew it. I kept him in check and made sure he never made any advances on her. One day I would take him to the bar and be his wingman, so I could lift myself of the stress of possible infidelity on my wife's part. It took about fifteen minutes to reach the Lounge with the dense traffic of the morning rush hour. In 2055, technology had advanced

greatly but people still worked all types of jobs. The private sector was at the precipice of the technological singularity, a point where AIs became as smart as the entirety of mankind.

Robotics and automation were still in their infancy compared to the boundless capabilities of artificial general intelligence. Traffic still existed due to the lack of fully automated cars. Outside of the Lounge, the three of us exited the vehicle. I paid the driver ten reichsmarks and he left. I looked out to the facade of the lounge and saw the antique design of the restaurant. The thin lettering of the restaurant was set against the backdrop of wood paneling. The front windows of the establishment were decorated with lavish velvet curtains to block in the sunlight for the customers. We walked in and a server greeted us.

“Hello, I am Ann. Are you guys here for the rodizio? Where would you like to sit?”

I looked out at the seating arrangements and saw most of the restaurant was full. Sets of tables filled the middle of the restaurant and booths on the sides were filled with patrons as well. In the back left of the restaurant, a booth was open. I pointed to it and told Ann,

“Yes we are having the rodizio. Can we sit in the booth back there?”

“Yes. Come with me,” Ann said.

My wife, the captain and I followed Ann to the booth and took our seats. From across the booth the smells of the open air kitchen reached us. I could smell the tender meats grilling and roasting, it was wonderful. It made my appetite insatiable at this point. Ann then said,

“The server will be with you soon, they will be giving you a selection of meats. Enjoy your meal.”

I sat next to my wife and Captain Braun sat in the booth across from us. Within three minutes, the first course of meat, rice and fries came to our table. The meat was pork sausage. The server laid the skewer on our plates and gave us two sausages each. As the meal went on, various assortments of meats came to our table and I enjoyed all of them. By the time we had sampled all of the meats at the lounge, I grabbed my belly full of beer and food and said

“Wow Adalbert, what an excellent recommendation. I'll be sure to come here at least once a month, I love this place. The meats were so juicy and tender, the fries crisp and the rice was good as well. They feed you well here.”

“What did I tell you Major Schriever? It was excellent, I knew you would enjoy it. I'm sure your wife did as well,” said Captain Braun.

He smiled at my wife and she said,

“Oh yes Captain, it was lovely. You know us women though, we can't eat so much to keep our shape. I thought I would eat as much as I could and maybe not eat later. I couldn't say no to a nice lunch.”

The server came to our table once we had signaled that we were full. He presented the bill and I was shocked. The cost was one hundred reichsmarks, this was surely a meal I could not pay for every month. I gave him the money in cash and the three of us headed outside to call a taxi to drop us off where we needed to be. My wife would be going to her car to drive home and Captain Braun and I back to the SS office in downtown Berlin.

The taxi came and dropped Captain Braun and I off first at the office. My wife kissed me goodbye and as she was leaving, waved at me from the backseat of the taxi. Braun and I entered the office and went to the front desk. At the front desk, an MP with the nametag of Corporal Weber said to us,

“You know the drill gentlemen. I need to see your identification before I can allow you into the office. I sign you in just like everyone else.”

I pulled my wallet out of my pants and took out my ID for the corporal. Adalbert did the same. He took the IDs and ran the identification numbers in the computer database as well as scanned them to check for forgeries. From behind the LCD flat panel monitor I could see a blue light which was projected onto his face and I could see the database he was scrolling through on the reflection in his glasses.

“You two gentlemen are all clear and you arrived early as well. I will make sure to note in the system that you arrived ten minutes earlier from your lunch break and the speech at the Reich Chancellery,” said Corporal Weber

I looked at the analog clock on the wall above the desk and it read

“1:30 pm”

We were just on time. The commanders of the SS were rigorous disciplinarians and would subject those who violated rules to extensive punishments. The SS was no joke and I took my job very seriously, any lapse of duty and my whole family and I could be subjected to torture or worse. Thankfully, it never came to that. I was always on duty and on call. To me, the Reich came first and my duty in the SS was to fulfill the obligations of the organization in the greater system.

“Thanks Corporal Weber. I will see you later,” I said.

Captain Braun said “Yes Corporal, see you later.”

The corporal saluted us and we went to the office elevators to go to our stations. Captain Braun and I worked on the third floor of the office and dealt with administrative affairs in the research and development arm of the SS known as the Elite-Korps. We arrived at the third floor and in the office, SS officers, enlisted personnel and civilians were busy with an assortment of tasks.

Officers were commanding enlisted soldiers and civilians were walking to and from cubicles with papers, binders and electronic tablets. The Elite Korps was highly compartmentalized and much of its inner workings were secretive. Even high rank officers in the chain of command like myself were only privy to what Hitler wanted us to know and when to know it. Those that worked on the

secret projects signed agreements that compelled them to secrecy under the threat of death. I signed many of those agreements and I never even knew why I was signing them.

The Elite-Korps had formed early last year under the pretense that it would be developing new weapons of warfare and population control. As I tell you my story now, what I came to fear as the worst deeds of the Reich would come from the engineering of the Elite-Korps and I had no power to stop it, well, not until late in this journey.

I never knew what any of the completed projects of the Elite Korps consisted of besides trivial things. Sometimes I would see classified documents on parts of machinery, most times I was in charge of selecting and recruiting the best scientists for the required duties of the Elite-Korps. The SS had changed its scope and focus since the Second World War and had become a broad outreaching unilateral organization, diversifying in military affairs, research and development.

I arrived at my office with Captain Braun shortly after leaving the elevators and walking past the large room of cubicles. The way this floor was structured was with a mostly open layout, officers's stations were on the perimeter of the cubicles and enlisted men intermixed with the civilians and their cubicles.

My office was in the bottom far left of the floor and Captain Braun and I shared this office. I took my cap off and rested it on the hanger next to the door with window blinds. Besides that window looking out into the cubicle room, there were no windows in this building and it was centrally heated and cooled. Often I felt depressed by the lack of sunlight and accompanying views of the city streets outside the office. The thoughts of depression usually subsided quickly as I got to the tasks at hand, but still, they managed to pop up from time to time.

Captain Braun took his seat and so did I. On my desk, a large gray folder of papers and resumes was placed on my desk by a subordinate officer. These were the newest applicants into the Elite Korps. The government subsidized the funding of this special branch of the SS, but like my office, it consisted of private contractors with security clearance and military members. I had begun searching through the resumes and cover letters early in the morning when I had arrived, but one applicant stood out to me and I thought about him extensively over lunch.

His name was Karl Von Neumann. On the upper right hand corner of his cover letter, he placed an image of himself as was required by the recruiters. He was a bit taller than the average untermensch of native birth in Germany. He had gray-bluish eyes and an angular squared jawline. His nose was of medium length and width. He was an Untermensch, of native birth and part of the Oberklasse. He was a wealthy forty year old man with extensive experience in the private sector as an engineer. He had multiple masters degrees in electrical engineering, computer engineering as well as materials science.

In his cover letter he stated how he wanted to dedicate himself to more than just the pursuit of money and academic goals. He wasn't very well known outside of academic circles but he patented incredible technologies and demonstrated their efficacy. The one that he highlighted in the cover letter was simple, but effective enough to convince me of his intelligence. He had created an isolation device for super sentient artificial intelligences which was effectively a portable anechoic chamber. He tested the ability of lower grade AIs in penetrating the chamber but none succeeded. The device was effectively the first containment mechanism for artificial

intelligence which was physical and scientifically proven to be unable of using electromagnetic spectrum propagation methods in controlling outside computers and systems.

The idea for physical containment existed for a long time and was called an artificial intelligence strongbox. No one had ever thought of experimenting with anechoic chambers and he was the first to patent the idea. His resume was full of awards he had won in his academic field and it also sported a reputable employment history. After spending some time contacting his employers in the morning, I came back to the office after lunch to stamp his resume for approval in joining the Elite-Korps. I was sure Von Neumann would end up becoming an essential part of the future of Nazi Germany and he did. What he created was an unspeakable horror of which I am now bound by.

I diligently scanned the other resumes which were submitted to me and none came close to Karl Von Neumann's achievements. By the time I had finished with work at five o'clock, I had approved of fifteen new scientists and engineers to work in the Elite-Korps. The surge in applications for positions in the Elite-Korps left me suspicious as to what Hitler's plans were for the deep state. The Korps was part of a new phase of German history in which the government was oblivious to the inner workings of its branches.

I sent the completed resumes to my superior, Lieutenant Colonel Ziegeler, for secondary approval and to arrange the meetings with the applicants. I would be interviewing them but little of what I would ask or say to them would matter. What really mattered was when they were in the system and shipped off to the Black Forest near Hausach. Hausach is 133 km south east of Stuttgart, and the Elite Korps underground labs were built deep in the Black Forest thirty kilometers into the forest.

That's as much as I knew about the Elite-Korps besides day to day administrative affairs and select information. I was satisfied with that though and my job paid well as an officer in the SS. Once the day was over I clocked out and left for home. I went to the parking lot adjacent to the office and got into my SUV and made my way for my home on the outskirts of Berlin. I lived in Dabergotz, a small town thirty five kilometers northwest of Berlin.

The drive home was the typical commute back home. Rush hour in Berlin subsided and the highways were mostly clear of traffic. I arrived home at 7:30pm and parked my car next to my wife's in front of my garage. My house was also typical for a house in Dabergotz. It was 233 square meters, it had a small backyard and was inconspicuous. A terracotta roof adorned a rectangular home with fiber cement siding. There was a small basement as well, where I built a virtual reality gaming center for my family and I.

I entered my home and my dog Max greeted me with a wagging tail and curious sniffing. She was always excited to see me and I got down on one knee to give her a hug. She gave me a sloppy kiss and licked my face. I loved Max and she gave me so much comfort. Max was a border collie and german shepherd mix with a white and brown spotted coat. I walked down the hallway to see my wife in the kitchen cleaning the countertops. As she heard me come in, she turned around and said

"Hello honey, how are you?"

I walked up to her and grabbed her by the waist. I then said,

“I am doing well my dear.”

I went in to kiss her and the faint smell of strawberries on her upper lip still lingered.

I pulled back and looked into her eyes. She was innocent and docile. I could feel her warmth against my body and longed for it that day while I was at work. I made my way to the living room to recline on my easy chair, took off my shoes and massaged my feet to relieve the pain in my soles. I needed new shoes, I thought. I needed dress shoes with comfortable insoles and cushioning to absorb the stress of walking around all day at the office. As I reclined back, Max came to my side and I called her up onto my lap.

She had calmed down from when I came home and I pet her to show her my affection. After a few minutes of playing with the dog I told her to go away. I took my smartphone out of my pocket and looked up the day's news. On my mobile browser I searched through various sources for good news stories. Nothing particularly important caught my eye. For the rest of the night I decided to head down into the basement and immerse myself in virtual reality.

I got up from my reclining chair and walked down the hallway to the basement stairs. I turned the light on and walked down the steps to the lavish basement. Once downstairs I headed into the entertainment room. The scent of warm leather hit my nose. The couches and chairs for the basement entertainment room were still brand new. The way the room was set up was with couches and chairs on one end of the room with a large flat screen on the other end. To the side of the flat screen, there was a computer desk with a chair.

In the four corners of the room, tracking stations equipped with infrared lasers mounted on tripods would track the positions of the virtual reality headset and controllers I used. The middle of the room was spacious enough for a room experience of walking a few meters in every direction. I was intending on purchasing an omnidirectional treadmill soon, but all of this virtual reality stuff was new to me. I never really embraced video games until late in my life, when I experienced virtual reality for the first time at a friend's house. I walked towards the computer, turned it on and started a game. The game was Call of the Abyss, a story driven shooter where you play as a Wehrmacht soldier in World War II.

The soldier, named Corporal Johann Gruber, finds himself in the middle of the war when unspeakable horrors invade his reality. Shadowy monsters and creatures that devour humans alive fight against both the Allies and the Axis powers all while the war goes on. I loaded up the game and put my wireless headset on along with my wrist straps for the controllers. The headset was created by a corporation called Iris and named The Vision. It featured a 220 diagonal degree field of view, 3000 pixel per degree saturation and ran at a resolution of 32k. The VR controllers had two thumbsticks to the top sides, three buttons on the top, a grip button and a trigger button for each controller.

I put the headset on top of my head, grasped the controllers and walked towards the center of the room to start the experience. Once I put the headset on, I was immersed into the main menu of the game. There were five options on the main menu which you could select by tapping with your fingers in air through the top sensor handle on the controller. The main menu updated with

every chapter of the game you had finished. Currently, I was in chapter two at the Battle of Normandy when the creatures from another dimension invaded into our reality. The menu background was from the perspective of a Wehrmacht soldier firing a machine gun onto the invaders with shadowy figures on the beach fading and fading into reality.

I selected to continue the game and the game loaded within three seconds back to my last save point. I was in a bunker on a cliff above the beaches of Normandy looking down at the Allies. It shocked me every time I entered this game and others. It seemed so close to real life that I couldn't distinguish that I was even in a game. The wide field of view and clarity of the headset dismantled my disbelief. I was holding onto a MG-42 while unloading round after round on the Allies which were coming onto the beach.

After a few minutes, the Allies were beginning to gain ground on the bunkers. Suddenly, like in the menu screen, dark shadowy amorphous creatures with limbs emerging out of their bodies in random places began materializing in the middle of the beach. From behind me, I could hear a main character of the game, Lieutenant Schwarz saying

“Corporal Gruber! Stop firing! We don't know what the hell those things are. We're going to retreat!”

I followed the commands of the Lieutenant and watched the commotion down below. These shadowy beings were emerging from iridescent portals and were tearing the Allied soldiers apart limb by limb. They shot at the creatures and it seemed effective in killing them. However, the creatures were fast and required a lot of bullets to kill. I let go of the MG-42 and abandoned my post with the rest of the soldiers inside the bunker.

All along the cliff top of the beach, soldiers were running from the bunkers to the back of transport trucks. Lieutenant Schwarz called out to my squad and said

“Get in the back of the third transport truck behind the bunker. We're headed for Bayeux to defend the city from the Allies and these monsters. Whatever these creatures are, they're probably in the city as well. Move it idioten!”

My squad and I got into the back of the transport truck and we made off for the highway. Behind us we could see these shadowy creatures teleporting into our reality. We unloaded bullets from our rifles and pistols into them and managed to kill some of them. As we got onto the highway, one of the creatures managed to teleport right to the back of the truck and latch onto it. I was all the way in the back right next to this amorphous monster. The soldiers in the vehicle began shooting at it and I pulled out a knife, slashed and stabbed it.

A black goo came out of the creature and onto my hands. Clearly, these things were physical creatures. In real life, I felt a tap on my back. I paused the game and took off the headset. It was my wife Hannah. She looked at me and said

“Heinrich, don't you think you're playing too much of those games? Come in bed with your wife and pleasure me. You only have so much time before you have to get back to work again tomorrow. You can play more on the weekend.”

The thought of having good sex with my wife was too tempting to decline. I then said,

“Usually I'm the one offering to have sex. It's rare for you to ever bring it up. Yes, let's have sex.”

I saved the game and powered down my computer. My wife was looking at me suggestively, with a fire of passion in her eyes. She looked back at me and suggestively swayed her ass side to side, tempting me to grab it. I grabbed it and she said

“Ooh, Heinrich, what a naughty boy. Come, come upstairs. I'll let you come in me and you can show me what it's like to have all that testosterone running through you.”

We went into the upstairs bedroom and we both quickly undressed. I watched my wife's perfectly curved breasts burst out of her bra and was immediately turned on. She smiled at me and my erection was coming on strong. As I further undressed she got down on her knees and gave me a blowjob. I could feel the waves of pleasure undulating throughout my body as she caressed my penis. After a few minutes of sucking, I went down on her and she moaned in pleasure.

We had sex for about an hour and it was orgasmic. My wife had an unusually high sex drive but was always uncomfortable with initiating it. To her it felt like she was feeding the beast inside her, a carnal monster incapable of reason. After we finished I turned over to the nightstand next to my bed to grab my nicotine vaporizer. After two hits, I was beginning to feel dizzy and another wave of pleasure hit me. A post coital cigarette was the past time of generations before me and the tradition lived on in me.

My wife asked for the vaporizer and took a hit. She never vaped and I was surprised. She coughed from the throat hit and put the vaporizer down. She laughed and said

“Now I see why you always do that after sex. I feel good. It feels like something inside me has just been fulfilled by the nicotine. Like a craving for a second orgasm, a craving for a higher high.”

My wife gave me the vaporizer and I looked at her. I grinned then said,

“If you want another one you could get it.”

My wife turned to me and said,

“It's too soon honey. Maybe tomorrow morning. We can't ruin the pleasure of sex by having it too often. It should come naturally, when the horniness overtakes you and pushes you to sex. If it happens soon, then we'll do it. Don't force it.”

The rest of the night we went without any sex as exhaustion over took me. The next morning I found myself at work and was informed that five of the newest candidates had been approved by Lieutenant Colonel Ziegeler and it was now my task to interview them. The first candidate I spoke to was Karl Von Neumann. I was nervous to be in the presence of such a highly

respected academic. Later in my journey, that respect would turn into fear and that fear, into dread.

The third floor of the office was reserved for secret work so we could not interview the candidates there. We met in a conference room on the second floor of the SS office. Von Neumann arrived earlier than expected and I was glad to take him on for the interview to get a break from work. I sat at one end of the oval conference table and Von Neumann's seat was at the opposite end of the table. Von Neumann came in at 12:45 and I got up from the table to greet him.

He gave me a firm handshake and said,

“Pleasure meeting you. I assume you are the officer that will be interviewing me today.”

“Yes. I am Major Schriever. It is nice to meet you as well, Karl. I have heard many good things about you and scanned your resume thoroughly. Have a seat and we will discuss your potential contract with the Elite-Korps.

Von Neumann took a seat across from me at the table. I sat down and while looking at him, thought of how far away he seemed. Figuratively, we were kilometers apart. He was a renowned engineer and I, I was an officer in a paramilitary organization tasked with recruiting scientists. Literally, he was a few meters away from me but it felt like there was an ocean in distance in between us. He sat there, waiting patiently with his hands cupped in one another with a look of curiosity in his eyes.

“Now that you are part of the Elite-Korps, you are bound by secrecy to comply contractually under the threat of death. Do you understand that any information given to you, any work you are given will require you to acknowledge and sign off on this agreement? Now is your chance to air any discontent you may have with this and back out. We hope that you do not Karl, your skills are needed in the Elite-Korps,” I said.

Even from such a distance away, I could see the tension and stress in Von Neumann's face. He swallowed his saliva and his laryngeal prominence bobbed up and down in his throat.

“I figured as much, Major Schriever. I will be a trusted confidant in this program. You can trust in me to maintain the secrecy and supremacy of the state.”

I opened my manilla folder and looked at Von Neumann's resume. I had no doubt of his authenticity but I had to remind myself of his previous positions to frame the interview questions.

I looked up from the cream colored and bumpy textured papers in the folder and asked,

“So, tell me about your experience at the University of Stuttgart, what led you to the creation of the anechoic chamber AI strong box?”

Karl twiddled his thumbs for a bit and said,

“Well, I was originally concerned with the ability for AIs to penetrate conventional software security measures as well as hardware limitations. At the university, as a lead researcher while working for the Supreme Technologies Corporation, I was curious about the topic because of the little advancement society was making towards artificial general intelligence.

It was hard separating my work from my research since the Supreme Technologies Corporation funded the research in the first place. There's really not much to say about it besides that it was a great achievement. I feel like our lack of progress in the field could be attributed to the fact that there was no physical containment mechanism for AGI. Now that we have achieved that, we have entered a new age of technological discovery. It's not long before a substrate inserted in one of the chambers becomes sentient.”

The story seemed generic but I accepted it for what it was. The next question I asked was,

“So, tell me about yourself Karl. What attributes would make you a good candidate for a position in the Elite-Korps? What are your strengths and what are your weaknesses?”

Von Neumann got comfortable in his chair and reclined back in it, putting his hands behind his head. He then said,

“I am a great people person. I can cooperate, understand deadline goals and work overtime for the joy of working. My life focuses primarily on my research and there is satisfaction I get from knowing I have discovered something new and applied that knowledge through engineering.

In terms of weaknesses, I feel like I have just two. The first weakness is that I take my work very seriously. If I know that I am more intelligent than a person I am speaking to I am not afraid to assert my dominance in an argument. These arguments can be heated and a source of discontent amongst my colleagues. I have a very bad temper, but it is rare for it to show.

My temper only flares up when I deal with a dummkopf, or an imbecile if you will. It's rare to find those in my line of work so things tend not to escalate to that point. But it's happened a few times, ever since my undergraduate days at the University of Stuttgart. I've had a few experiences where the veins in my head have almost burst out in fury.”

Karl laughed, awkwardly. As he was speaking, I was writing down his comments on an interviewee form in the manilla folder.

“Interesting, Karl. I recommend that you do not berate your superiors in the program or even your subordinates while you are contracted by the Elite-Korps. The SS has a hierarchy of strict disciplinarians. Although the Elite-Korps is secretive and a lot of freedom is given to the workers in the program, you are subject to be court martialed for any improprieties which may get out of hand. Is that understood Karl?” I said.

“Yes Major Schriever, I understand. I'm just telling you because I am honest. It's in your best interest to know.” Karl said.

I looked at the clock above Karl's head and saw that fifteen minutes had passed. The interview by this point was just a formality, only meant to sieve out liars and bad fits for the open positions. I was confident in Von Neumann's capabilities and proposed to him one last question instead of extending the interview.

"I'd like to keep the interview short Karl, I feel like your answers have been adequate and I have ascertained most of what I needed to know from your resume and the comments here today. My last questions are what do you feel you will take from this experience? What will you do to overachieve and produce for the program? Finally, what would you like to be paid?"

Karl sat forward in the chair and stroked his chin. He then said,

"I feel like my respected colleagues and I will develop technologies that will propel the Reich into the future. We will be at the forefront of cutting edge research that will make Germany a more secure and blissful place.

In terms of work, I dedicate myself to it. If more is expected of me I will gladly do it. I go into this knowing that I will be the best scientist on the team, not to be braggadocious but I believe that is true.

For my salary, I will accept nothing less than 400,000 reichsmarks. I believe my experience warrants that pay and my results will warrant it as well. I have one question for you Major Schriever, when does my employment start?"

I wrote down his comments and said,

"400,000 reichsmarks is a large salary. I have no doubt you will be paid that given your experience. Your employment starts tomorrow Karl. Once I finish this interview with you, Captain Braun will provide instructions on how to reach The Black Forest laboratories and give you your employee number, access codes and official papers. If that is all you would like to say, I have no further questions. The interview is over and you have been accepted into the program.

Good luck Karl."

Karl got out of his seat and came up to me. He shook my hand and said,

"For the Reich, genosse"

He smiled at me and in his eyes I could see a fire burning inside his being. I knew from the moment I met him that he was too smart for his own good. He represented a generation ingrained in the mythos of Hitler, a cult I would revolt against. Ironically, everything I had ever lived for would mean nothing. Strange, it's strange how things work and how time no longer had any real meaning.

The rest of the day was filled with interviews with scientists that didn't impress me at all. None of them had the charisma or intellect that Von Neumann had. I was instructed to meet with Hitler

on his personal orders after my shift at the office. He made it a personal goal of his to familiarize himself with the officers of the Schutzstaffel and maintain a relationship with us.

I took a cab to the Reich Chancellery and was greeted at the entrance by two SS MPs. Above the guards, the embossed Parteiadler watched over the entrance as it had for generations. The eagle was representative of the force of the state and it engrained itself in my dreams. I saluted the guards and provided my identification to them and they let me into the building. Having been here before, I knew how absurd the layout of the building was.

Hitler's office was in the central area of the complex, down several long corridors, a winding maze of the apparatus of the state. Since Albert Speer's construction of the new Reich Chancellery in 1939, modern upgrades were added to the building. There was no longer a sweltering heat in the summer and cool drafts in the winter. Centralized air-conditioning and heating was adjustable in every room and hallway which lead to a much more comfortable atmosphere. I made my way to Hitler's office in the center of the building and Speer's work captivates me to this day.

The halls were dark and grim, a portent of the future of humanity. The lights casted down from the ceiling and dragged the shapes of things into long shadows in the quiet hallways. Portraits of Hitler, the master race and white Renaissance artists adorned the halls. The high ceiling reminded me of my place within this society, although I was an officer in the SS, the machinery of the state was well above me. I reached Hitler's office and opened the tall wooden doors and there was Hitler with a group of people, standing by his desk.

The SS officers were receiving commendations from Hitler as well as speaking to him personally. Not much had changed since Hitler's early days in the chancellery. He kept the same old furniture which was rarely used, the same rugs and adornments on the wall. What was clear was the patina of dust on the walls and paintings. Hitler didn't like having servants in his study cleaning and moving things around. He was personal, reserved and quiet.

This was all in stark contrast with the public image of Hitler the party propagated throughout the years. The yelling and screaming Führer was a public misconception of the man that Adolf was and the Reich he represented. In the coming years I would come to think of what was once the glory of the Reich was in fact, a horror. It was a mirage of societal progress and behind the curtain was the machinery of death, extermination and genocide. But today, I was proud of my country and my Führer. I presented to him one face but hid another.

I walked towards the group in front of the desk and saluted Hitler.

"Sieg heil, mein Führer," I said.

Hitler saluted back and I assumed an at rest position.

"Major Schriever, I'm glad you could join us. I assume you had no trouble reaching the chancellery? Traffic is usually dense at this time, given the fact that it's rush hour."

I looked into Hitler's eyes and he stared back into my soul. The greatest man to ever live was in front of me, I thought to myself. He was only great for the immense amount of fear he could instill in me, with this fickle amount of power he really had. I then said,

"It wasn't so bad my Führer, I took a taxi to the chancellery. My car is parked at the SS office garage, downtown. It is good to see you, you're looking great."

Hitler smiled and said

"Gentlemen, I feel like I've spoken to you enough about the pertinent matters on my mind. I would like a few minutes alone with Major Schriever. I gave you due time and now it is Major Schriever's turn to speak to me."

The group saluted Hitler and walked out of his study. Hitler sat on his desk and folded his arms. He then said,

"I didn't want them interfering in our conversation, Major Schriever. Today, I have some good news for you. I've been watching your work within the SS closely and I have recommended for your promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. Your promotion should be rewarded to you in a few days while we secure your top secret clearance."

I was surprised by his last statement.

"Top secret clearance? For what my Führer?"

Hitler got up from the desk, smiled and put his hand on my shoulders. He then said,

"We're transferring you to The Black Forest. I want you to see first hand what we've created within the Elite-Korps laboratories. Your managerial and recruiting skills have proved effective. I want you to monitor the scientists you've recruited, discipline them and report on their work. You were under the illusion that everything was highly compartmentalized and secret, but that isn't necessarily true.

In the laboratories, there is freedom to know what is going on. But on the outside, everything is secretive. There would be no way we could effectively work on cutting edge research if it was the case that everything was compartmentalized. It's much better to have an open environment with a one way funnel into that environment. The SS is that funnel into the Elite-Korps. By securing the funnel from the outside, you and your fellow officers have ensured nothing can leak from the inside out."

While Hitler was saying this to me, I was shocked. Everything I knew about the Elite-Korps was wrong. I thought it was a highly bureaucratic and compartmentalized project, but the way Hitler described it, it seemed rather simple.

"Why am I designated to go there my Führer? Wouldn't a higher ranking officer be better suited for the job?" I said.

Hitler had taken his hand off my shoulder and went to the seat behind his desk. He grabbed a hot cup of tea off the table and took a sip of it. Presumably, to sedate him with the concentrated apigenin within their genetically modified leaves.

“Heinrich, there are no high ranking officers in the Elite-Korps laboratories beyond Colonel. The reason I designed it this way was two fold. The SS has become a large and vital organization with its tendrils branching all over the world. The higher ranked officers are needed in the top down administration of the entire organization in these branches. The Elite-Korps, while proving to be critical in its research, is less intensive in administrative oversight. You are going to be trusted with a lot of responsibility, which I know you can handle. You'll be going back to your old days of scientific research and engineering, before you were commissioned as an officer in the SS. If I remember correctly, you were once a research scientist at LMU Munich, were you not?”

“Yes my Führer, it is very humbling and kind that you still remember so much about me. Those days are long gone, I am a much older man now. I was researching prototype machine learning intelligences. We always ran into the issue of not having a physical containment mechanism for the AIs, so they always ended up being dilapidated and useless, in terms of going beyond prototypes into safe testing environments. We achieved critical goals in the overall progress of advancing machine learning however. I'm interested where Karl Von Neumann will take the Elite-Korps, given that his anechoic chamber device is the best physical containment mechanism I've ever seen for an AI.”

Hitler pulled his seat in closer and crossed his hands, laying his chin on them while his arms supported his head up. He smirked somewhat condescendingly, as if speaking to a child. An ominous portent in my eyes. He propped up his chin with a delta of four fingers, index fingers buttressing one another with thumbs buttressing one another as well and said,

“Yes, I've heard of Von Neumann. He is an exceptional scientist. I'm willing to bet with his skills and knowledge, the program will advance very quickly. Now Major Schriever, I feel like I've said all I needed to. I want you to leave the Chancellery today with a newfound happiness and excitement for your new position. I feel like you deserve it entirely. I must get back to the day to day affairs of the state. Being the Führer is consuming and leaves me little time for much else. Goodbye Major Schriever.”

Hitler got out of his chair and I saluted him. He saluted back and I made my way out of the Chancellery. I was free to go home and rest for the day.

April 16th, 2055

Friday. I was now a Lieutenant Colonel. I requested leave from my duties to have an extended weekend to celebrate the promotion. On Monday, I would be heading to the Elite-Korps laboratories with a top secret security clearance and more power than humanly imaginable. Today, I planned on visiting Berlin's Reich History Museum to let the promotion sink in and compare myself to Germany's past. As a child I studied the history of Germany but over the years those memories were replaced with more functional memories, memories of how things worked in my duties. My one day extended leave was granted by Colonel Reinhard Ulrich at the SS office and he amongst several other officers at the promotion board approved of my promotion to Lieutenant Colonel.

I left the office at 10:30 am and took a cab to the Reich History museum. I arrived at the museum and it wasn't crowded at all. At the main entrance I paid ten reichsmarks to an employee at the ticket booth to enter, but entry was free. The museum relied mostly on donations but I felt it was my duty to donate for the preservation of history, its dipping and staining in blood notwithstanding. Behind the ticket booth was a large floorplan in the middle of the lobby. I looked at the layout and the museum was split into four quadrants horizontally with three floors spanning vertically.

Each quadrant was designated specifically to one section of time in the past, on each floor respectively. The top left quadrant of the museum was full of exhibits of Germany before the Second World War. The top right quadrant was World War II exhibits. In the bottom left quadrant were exhibits of the struggles of world domination post World War II. The final bottom right quadrant was miscellaneous exhibits of all eras including famous art works. I decided that I was going to view the entire museum.

In the main lobby, giant canvases of modern Nazi artists adorned the lobby walls. The images ranged from goose stepping soldiers, portraits of Hitler, panzer tanks and images of Berlin. To me it seemed incomprehensible how such large oil paintings could be done and transported into the museum. These initial paintings reminded me of my deep love for the Reich. I made my way into the top left quadrant and planned to make my way clockwise throughout the quadrants and floors, spiraling deeper into the ascension of the Reich.

When I reached the top left quadrant, I grabbed a pair of headphones from one of the bins near the exhibits to listen to the commentary for each exhibit. The theme of the museum was centered around the Reich and the history of Germany as an empire. The entirety of the exhibits in the top left quadrant dealt with the Holy Roman Empire and the proto-states of Germany. One exhibit that caught my eye was the capture of Richard the Lionheart by the House of the Staufen. The history of the past in our timeline was uncertain. Everything had a tinge of imperialistic fervor and was skewed in favor of Germany.

The exhibit painted the English as traitorous and untrustworthy. With a critical eye on history, this was not the first time I doubted my country and the way things were. There was so much besides the bias of the Reich that concerned history. I looked at some of the other exhibits in the quadrant then I moved to the top right quadrant of the museum.

After I walked to the second quadrant, I noticed that the rest of the World War II displays were much of the same subject matter. They exhibited the grim reality of World War II. Hundreds of millions had been killed and Germany excelled at fighting. The pressure of the war led to great technological achievements and the culmination of the war was the dropping of the first atomic bomb on New York City. I walked to the next display in the exhibit which was a video of the dropping of the bomb.

Next to the video was an interactive touchscreen with casualty figures, a blast radius and fallout radius. In 1950, after the mainland invasion of the United States, Germany dropped a 100 kiloton bomb on Midtown Manhattan.

Again, a grainy black and white video portrayed the falling bomb and its detonation in mid air. The structures around Manhattan were annihilated and a blast wave could be seen in the video rippling for miles. Deep inside me, even at the height of my indoctrination into the party, I felt that something was wrong. I guess my visit to the museum was the first time the repressed feelings I had about the Reich came out. I came to dread warfare and saw my country as something horrendous. I was conflicted in knowing that I could never tell anyone how I really felt about the horrors Germany inflicted on the world. I fought the feelings with counter reasoning that maybe the world was a better place since Germany took over.

Only the strongest deserved to survive and Germany was the strongest, I thought.

I then went to the most prominent display. The crowning feature of the World War II display in this quadrant was the triumph held for Franklin Deleanor Roosevelt. Berlin was in celebration as he was paraded around down the main capital street to the Reich Chancellery square. At the square, a grainy video was playing in the exhibit of Hitler holding the head of FDR and giving a speech. I plugged in my headset to the display and listened to the commentary. I was most of the way through Hitler's speech when he said,

"...the war is over. It took us many years to defeat our cowardly enemy but Germany has triumphed. As I hold the putrid head of Roosevelt, I think of only the many German lives that were lost in achieving this victory. Now that we have defeated the Americans, Germany has no Resistance left besides the last remnants of the Soviet Union. The Reich shall forever be enshrined as the true destiny of mankind!"

Hitler raised FDR's head and the video feed switched to a camera that panned the square. Thousands of Germans roared in applause for the death of FDR and the triumph of the Reich in World War II. After the video feed ended, it looped back on itself, perhaps for many more times until the museum would shut down for the night. I pulled my headphones out of the exhibit display three point five millimeter jack connector and was reminded of how things were to be in the future. When democracy died, the Reich came to be.

I left the second quadrant and made my way to the third quadrant. The main exhibit was a video of the bombing of Moscow and the defeat of the Soviets. Unrelenting in their efforts, the Soviets did not surrender even with the looming threat of nuclear warfare. An extensive carpet bombing campaign with footage from the air raids was displayed at this exhibit. This was the pivotal moment when the Soviet Union buckled under the pressure of Nazi Germany. The video transitioned from the bombing campaign to a diplomatic summit with Stalin and Hitler signing a peace treaty.

By 1952, Stalin had surrendered the territory of the Soviet Union to Germany. He was promptly executed for war crimes afterwards, despite his paying of tribute to Hitler. A civil war broke out in the USSR after it was annexed under the control of Nazi Germany. The Resistance was promptly quashed due to their inability to mobilize fighting forces effectively and quickly. The rest of the exhibits in this quadrant displayed similar subjects, up until the present day.

The history of the Reich was drenched in blood, just like the crimson background of the swastika standard. The inferior races were exterminated in concentration camps and other races led to a world of eugenic superiority for the white race and only the white race. Without

heteronomic forces besides the Nazi empire, the states of the world quickly crumbled under the jackboot of the Nazi regime. In the years after the Second World War, the few wars that were fought were trivial. My subordinate, Adalbert Braun, fought in the last war of the Nazi empire against the Maori tribes of the Australian outback.

That war, like the many against the lesser states and loose collection of tribes around the world, were merely a formalities. The final display in this quadrant was of a world map emblazoned with a Nazi flag. All of the territory of Earth fell underneath the empire, and the exhibit gave some statistics and details of Earth at the present day. There were four billion people on Earth and the distribution between the untermensch and the higher class whites was evenly distributed, two billion for each major subdivision of the white race.

As I browsed the exhibits, I thought of the billions of lost in wars and extermination camps. Inside me there was a war for my conscience. I believed in the Reich and I believed in the goodness of humanity. At my home, I kept secret books of mankind's past banned by the Nazi party. These books came at a high cost on the black market, but they signified a time in history where mankind was striving towards equality and justice for mankind. Since 1950, generations of lost voices would never be heard. Generations of liberating ideas, worldviews and potentially fulfilled lives would never come to fruition.

I read these secret books and hid them from my wife within the insulation of our attic. The other side of my conscience was towards party loyalty and the proliferation of the white race. I grew up with racism and inequality in my blood. No race was more beautiful and accomplished than the one I was born into. That's what they told us, anyway. It wasn't true and these exhibits maintained that worldview. I can't fault the decisions of those who were born late after the war to maintain the status quo. Subordination and rebellion would surely mean death.

We are stuck on this planet forever under the auspices of the Reich, for the time being atleast. The metaphysical quandary of whether or not the peculiar fate could be determined was still out of our hands, for now. The conflicting thoughts quickly left my mind and I made sure not to give away my emotions to the cameras watching me in the museum. The party always watched and used AIs trained to spot emotional weakness. Emotions were for the quiet confines of your bedroom pillow or the bathroom, where no one watched you. I made my way to the final quadrant of the museum and was keen on leaving. The museum was supposed to inspire me but it left me disenhearted.

At the final quadrant, I quickly browsed the paintings and made my way to the central exhibit which was a giant oil canvas painting. The painting spanned from just below the high ceiling of the museum to the a few feet above the ground. It was a painting of Hitler and the highest ranking members of the Nazi party. Hitler was in his formal attire with a Nazi standard in his hands. He held the standard with both hands and it draped from left to right across his body.

There were eleven people in the painting, all the top members of the Nazi Party. On the left was Walther Funk, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Albert Speer, Karl Donitz and Heinrich Himmler. In the center was Hitler. To the right of Hitler was Hermann Goring, Martin Bormann, Joseph Gobbels, Wilhem Keitel and Erich Raeder. The painting was of the men standing in front of a fifteen thousand man detachment of Wehrmacht troops in Nuremberg. Behind the troops and the

leaders, the sun shined down upon the parade, with god rays piercing the clouds surrounding the sun.

The sheer size of the painting struck me and I became enraptured by it. It represented the solidarity of the Reich and its trusted leadership. There were the men that saved Germany, in a romanticized depiction of their greatness. The leaders and soldiers were saluting out towards the perspective of the viewer in unison. I moved in closer to the touchscreen display next to the canvas to read about the artist and the details of the painting. I pressed the screen and it came out of standby mode. Again a crimson red background, the white text with a black outline on the screen matched the flag colors.

The artist's name was Paul Berger. The name of the painting was "One Reich." In the description, he said he was commissioned by Hitler to make a painting which would encapsulate the power of the party. Created between 2029 and 2030, the painting was laboriously worked on for a year and donated to the museum by Hitler. It was originally meant to hang in Hitler's study, but Hitler felt it would be better if the people could see the painting.

I stepped back to see the painting in its entirety one last time before I left for home. In my mind the words of Hitler resonated. At a rally five years ago, he famously said

"The power of the will is its ability to succeed at all costs. Germany is within your blood and you are the blood of Germany. The Reich is Within you and Without You, Forever More. Forever will the Reich reign supreme."

In my mind I saw Hitler and his usual steadfast expression of sternness. The party was within me and without me. No matter how hard I tried to resist, to change the course of things against the overwhelming current of the state, the jackboots of the party would march onwards into the future.

Chapter Two: The Elite-Korps

April 21st, 2055

Due to the distance from Dabergotz and The Black Forest, the government assisted my wife and I by moving us into a new house in the small town of Forbach. Forbach was 8 kilometers northwest from the secretive lab hidden in the dense forest. Few roads cut through this area of the forest and the government had rerouted traffic on these roads for the explicit purpose of keeping the labs secret. As my wife was making our new house homely, I was driving on my way to the Elite Korps laboratories. The drive was short, about twenty minutes considering that we were in rural Germany.

It was peaceful, that first drive there. I looked out into the blooming trees and thought of the wildlife living in the shrubbery. Birds were chirping and deers were frolicking about in the disparate patches of green fields interwoven with dense forestry and fauna. I thought of how ideal that world view of peaceful nature was, but it was far from the truth. These creatures fought for their lives and died much sooner than us humans did. We were effectively immortal and without struggle. Only mankind was now at peace or so I thought back then.

Deep in the forest, I encountered my first military checkpoint before entering the laboratories. These checkpoints were placed on the roads leading into this section of the forest and were manned with machine gun nests and watchtowers. I pulled up my SUV to the checkpoint gate and a soldier hailed at me to stop.

“Stop! Show us your papers! You are entering a restricted area!” Yelled the soldier.

He was dressed in forest green camouflage and I could not see his eyes underneath the shadow of the top of his cap. He descended from the watchtower with his assault rifle un-holstered. He pointed the rifle at me and said

“Who are you? Do not make any sudden movements besides giving me your papers. This is a restricted area that only government officials with top secret clearance have access too. I need

to see the right identifiers or I might have you court martialed for entering restricted territory and airspace soldier!”

I put my car in park and reached for the glovebox. I took out the clearance papers, my identification and I then gave it to the soldier. He let his rifle hang with slack from the sling around his body. He examined the papers and then looked at me to confirm my identity. He scanned me up and down, and his eyes were darting back and forth from the papers and my face. He flicked my ID photo with his middle finger and put wrapped it in the clearance papers.

“Your papers seem legitimate. You're cleared for entry. We will be alerting the facility that you are coming. Have a good day Lieutenant Colonel Schriever.” The soldier said.

He gave me back my papers and I made my way to the laboratories which were two kilometers down the road. As I came into sight of the laboratory, another checkpoint around the perimeter cleared me for entry. The dense forest area had been cleared for a large complex. From above ground, I could see a large dark black building with no windows. It was rectangular in shape in about symmetrical proportions in length, depth (from what I could see above ground) and width, barely qualifying as a rectangular prism. In front of the facility, there was another gate with a soldier in a booth.

I pulled up to the booth and asked

“Hail soldier. Where is the parking for the laboratory?”

“Greetings. Go down the right on this road here and go around the building. The parking is in the back. I hope you have a good day Lieutenant Colonel Schriever.” The soldier said.

He must have read my name tag and saw my ranking insignia on my left shoulder. I made my way to the back of the building and the parking lot was massive. Thousands of cars were parked behind the building and people were leaving their cars to enter the building. The front of the building was in front of the parking lot. I parked one hundred and forty rows behind the front of the building and made my way to the front door.

I grasped my papers firmly as I walked to the front doors. Once inside, I spoke to a receptionist at the front desk. He, like everyone else, was a soldier in the German Wehrmacht.

“Hello. I am Lieutenant Colonel Heinrich Schriever. I was told to report to the lower level laboratories for duty. Is there any paperwork or verification process I need to go through before I head down there?”

The soldier, a blonde Aryan, looked at me from behind the bright glow of a flat screen monitor and said

“Yes, Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, we've been expecting you. We're going to need to put you into the system and provide you with identification before you start working. Head to the fourth floor. Down the hall from the fourth floor lobby, you should see a sign for a room named 'Intake'. The elevator is behind me and to the right. If you prefer the stairs, it's around the corner down the hallway behind me. Have a good day Lieutenant Colonel Schriever.”

I saluted the soldier and made my way for the fourth floor. Once there, the floor seemed rather nondescript. It was a floor with administrative offices. I went to the intake room and there was a line of new recruits waiting to get their pictures taken. When it was my turn to get a picture, the attendant asked me

“Papers please.”

I handed my papers and thought about the soldier who flipped me off. They’re all probably like this, soldier, civilian, they’re all assholes.

“I’ll take those and give them to my partner over here who will process them. You should be receiving an ID card a few minutes after the picture is taken. Take a seat and I will take your picture.”

I sat down and the attending civilian took a picture. The camera bulb flashed and engrained itself in my vision for a minute afterwards. Within two minutes, I had my Elite-Korps ID card.

“On your identification card, you will see your designated sector you must report to. This does not mean you are limited to that sector. That will most likely be your duty station.”

“Next!” The attendant said as he waved in the next recruit in line, overexaggeratingly, flailing his arms about.

“..Come on down! Now, I’ll...” I heard as I made my way out of the queue and walked towards the elevator. The sound of the attendants voice slow dissipated in the atmosphere as I walked down the hall and focused on my ID card, glancing at it.

In the elevator, I read the card. It said

“ELITE KORPS PERSONNEL IDENTIFICATION CARD

LIEUTENANT COLONEL HEINRICH SCHRIEVER

CO-COMMANDER OF OPERATIONS

DUTY STATION: CYBERNETICS SUBSECTOR, OFFICE 525”

I liked my ID. I felt like the off white background and green embossed text looked professional. My beautiful face was on it of course. The elevator took me down to the first lower level floor and I was shocked at what I saw when I got out. The floor plan was open and enormous, with laboratories in sight of the offices on the perimeter of the main floor. Scientists, researchers and SS personnel were beginning their workday and setting up their stations.

Once I came out of the elevator, an SS officer came to me, departing from a workstation with scientists around it.

“Lieutenant Colonel Schriever? I am Colonel Josef Von Staufen, the overseer of operations here at the Elite-Korps. Your arrival was prompt and timely, I like that. Welcome to the Corps. I will be showing you around and then instructing you on the duties I expect of you. We will be touring the entire facility and you will be given a map of the premises. Familiarize yourself with what is going on, it will be critical in your time here. I will be evaluating you and reporting directly to Reichsführer-SS Himmler. Besides him, no other SS officer outranks me in the administration of the Corps. Be mindful of that Lieutenant Colonel Schriever.” Von Staufen said, with a squinting of his eyes and a stern rigidity to his face.

He put out his hand and said,

“Good to have you on board.”

I shook his hand and he proceeded to show me around the laboratories.

“This is the cybernetics and robotics laboratory, Lieutenant Colonel Schriever. Here we are in the preliminary stages of creating mechanized robots with protosentient artificial general intelligence.”

We moved to the center of the floor and there, a scientist in a white lab coat had an electronic tablet in his hands. He was testing the rotational torque of the mechanized hand of a robot. The hand was large, from my observations, roughly five times the size of my hand. Around this station were several more stations, testing the various other functions of prototypes mechanized exoskeletons and robots. Von Staufen looked at me and said,

“The Führer seeks to mechanize the Wehrmacht, Lieutenant Colonel Schriever. The dimensions for these robots are as follows, Schriever; They will be fifteen feet tall, six feet wide and three feet deep in volumetric size. We don't foresee any need for combat so soon, but you never know Schriever. There are enemies in the shadows and out there in space, in the great beyond.”

I scanned the floor for other workstations to see the cybernetic development that was going on. I was interested in cybernetics but I wasn't particularly fond of automated killer robots. I found that a lack of human touch removed a key safety feature of technology, a lack of control, primarily.

“Colonel Von Staufen, I already don't approve of the robotics projects. Is there any way we can petition Hitler to make these more like mechanized exoskeletons rather than being fully autonomous?”

Von Staufen's face slightly ticked and grimaced as he stared into my eyes, scanning for my commitment to the Reich.

“Hitler is very strict about what he wants, Schriever, and we cannot let our occluded enemies subvert us into technological inferiority. But enough talk of what should be and of hypothetical what ifs, Schriever, let's move to the next workstation. Today, I plan on showing you three

workstations per floor and then cutting you loose to interface with the scientists on each floor. Here, in the Elite-Korps, there is somewhat of a horizontal-hierarchical hybrid operational structure. The teams work interdependently with one another as well as by themselves, but they report to their respective officers. You'll find that our method is the most optimal way to develop the technology the Reich needs."

Von Staufen turned from the workstation and motioned for me to move with him with his right hand. We scurried and interweaved between the rotating teams of scientists and their workstations working on their respective projects. In the midst of all these intelligent minds, I felt as if I were a worker bee in a hive and the queen we worked for was the motherland itself. The din of the room faded into a static ambience of voices as I focused my gaze on Von Staufen's agile movement, turning on a dime like a machine in the flesh. As we reached the second exhibit that Von Staufen was showing me, one of the scientists looked up from the table and looked me in the eyes.

I could see the fear and trepidation in his eyes, as if the things he was working on had gotten out of his hands and into the hands of Hitler and the Reich.

"This, Schriever, is the first prototype of a neural net mesh that will interface with the brains of our soldiers."

I averted my gaze from the scientist and looked at the device on the table. It was a cap of sorts, with electrodes that embedded into the skin of the end user. It looked primitive, as if mimicking an electroencephalograph cap, but surely there was more to this device than met the eye.

"What's so special about this neural net, Colonel? I don't understand, didn't they have EEG caps in the 1940s and 1950s, after the war? This technology is old."

Von Staufen grabbed the neural net mesh from the workstation bench and gave it to me. I felt its fluidity in my hands, as it was lightweight and pliable. It felt easy to contort, stretch and manipulate but maintained tensile elasticity for stretching to conform to any size of head. I looked up from the neural net mesh towards Von Staufen and he unconsciously smirked at me, saying next,

"Try it on Heinrich and see what I'm talking about. You'll need to activate the electrodes so they can interface with your brain by pressing this button on the back of the neural net."

Von Staufen reached out and glided his finger across the electrodes which would have covered the right and back side of my skull and stopped at a small red, black and white button with a swastika on the back of the neural net. I nodded in agreement that I saw where the button was and then I put the neural net on my head. I placed the neural net mesh on my head and then I pressed the back button. Within fifty milliseconds, the electrodes pierced my skin and left me with a burning sensation in my scalp and sides of my head.

As the electrodes began stimulating my brain, I saw visions of a strange place with strange creatures. This was a place of maddening horror and grotesque carnality. This was some sort of Boschian world, of creatures interdispertely mingled with creatures, human and monstrosity alike, with skin flayed off entirely and muscle, bone, ligaments, sinews, tendons and organs exposed. I still felt myself fully within the real world, before I was fully immersed and pressed the

button on the back of the neural net. The electrodes disengaged and I found myself bleeding from the skull ever so slightly. The trickles of blood ran down to my lips and into my mouth. The saltiness of the blood and the pungent hemoglobin reminded me of the frailty of flesh and the fact that this world, outside of the one I saw in the neural net, was not the only one we could call real.

Von Staufen looked at me and seemed unphased by the fact that I had disengaged so quickly.

“I can’t tell you what you saw Heinrich. No one knows exactly why the visions of that place happen, but don’t be afraid. It’s a common archetype in Nazi society, a physical illusion of the brain and the conditioning we go through in the name of the motherland. That’s why we all see that place, the land of the flesh.” Von Staufen said, looking at me and scanning my face with his eyes for my emotions.

“I’d rather not know anymore.” I said.

“The work we do here is serious Heinrich and you shouldn’t be afraid to know more. It’s always in your best interest to ask for the truth in the work you do and why it’s done. But, the truth is complex and an unnecessary burden for now, at least for your first day on duty. I don’t have much more to show you on this floor. Today will be a general tour of the facilities and acclimation to what’s going on. I don’t expect miracles of productivity out of you, just yet. Follow me to the second floor.”

Colonel Von Staufen swiftly turned on his heels towards the elevators in the back of the large underground chamber to the next floor. After a short elevator ride, we reached the second floor. The floor was in a similar layout to the first. As we stepped out of the elevator, he pointed to a set of large off ramps by the sides of the elevator.

“You see those ramps, Schriever? Each floor is connected by a daisy chain linked series of ramps and a peripheral structure of garages which allow us to move material and machines from the outside into the laboratories. The periphery of the building on all five lower floors is dedicated to the movement and transport of machinery and materials. You’ll be expected to monitor the inflow and outflow of materials from the periphery and to inspect the shipments on regular intervals.”

I looked down into the corridors where the off ramps led into. The corridors were dark, and illuminated with flickering fluorescent lights. The ramps seemed like they had not been used in some time by the way the floor tiles and ceiling tiles looked--old, with a patina of dust and mildew on the paneling of the ceiling and floor. Everything at this point must have been self sufficient within the laboratories given the amount of materials I saw in the Cybernetics Subsector.

As I looked out from the entryway of the elevator, the second lower level was partitioned differently from the first. A main center area was present like the first floor but the rest of the floor was cordoned off into smaller rooms.

“This is the weapons testing laboratory, the Munitions Subsector, Lieutenant Colonel Schriever. Here we are testing and creating the latest ballistic and laser projectile weapons for the military.

Everything you see down here are prototypical, but let's go to the gun range in the front of the laboratories to test out one of the latest weapons. I'm sure you will be impressed."

Von Staufen took me to the top left quadrant of the second lower level to the gun range. As we walked into the room, I was astounded by how quiet the room was despite all of the gun fire. Yet still, within close vicinity of the gunshots, ear protection needed to be worn. On the wall next to the door, sets of thick ear muffs were hanging on the wall. Colonel Von Staufen took one and I took one as well. The room was padded with interlocking rectangular acoustically anechoic absorption material and at the lower end of the gun range, the absorption material was full of bullet holes. Down the range, I saw an assortment of weapons being tested. Von Staufen pointed towards the first divider and I saw a soldier unloading lead from an automatic rifle with little recoil.

"You see Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, we've developed a method of absorbing and deflecting the energy of the bullets and the gas ejection. It's a very simple mechanistic system which took rigorous testing to fine tune. The stock of the gun is connected to the body of the soldier and through a series of electromagnetic actuators, the back and forward momentum of the gun is transferred to the core of the soldier and his frame. We plan on augmenting the system with an exoskeleton soon to further reduce the shakiness of the weapon."

The soldier continued firing rounds until he fully expended his magazine, calibrating his aim and at this point, the target sheet he was firing at had bullet holes clustered so tightly that I could tell the gun was accurate and precise. As we walked down the range, Von Staufen showed me the latest laser projectile rifles the Elite Korps was working on.

"This is really our *piece de resistance*, as the weak French would have once put it, Heinrich."

Von Staufen smirked at me and I raised my eyebrows and faked a chuckle. Sentimentally, I felt indifferent to the double entendre.

"Watch as this soldier racks the slide of the laser rifle after a series of laser pulses and as the rifle does calibrates automatically with the pulsatile nature of the laser. This prototype has a series of gears and levers which translate the linear thrust of the racking into torque which then cranks a smaller flywheel and charges the battery with each racking of the chamber. It's not a lot of energy that is recovered, but after a few expenditures we can manage to saturate a few of the ultracapacitors using the dynamic recoil of the laser itself and the manual racking. It's still being worked on."

I was impressed with Von Staufen's grasp of the scientific research taking place in the laboratories. My background in computer engineering and computer science left me a bit disoriented, but I could manage to reorient myself given appropriate re-education in the physics of the matter at hand.

"So, Colonel, you mentioned that I will get to be shooting some guns. What have you got for me?"

Von Staufen smiled and said

“Since we are running short on time and there are many more things to do today, I’d like to get straight to that. I have reserved booth number five for us at the end of the range. There you’ll see a special type of pistol that I’d like you to shoot. You’ll find how it works to be interesting.”

I was intrigued by Von Staufen’s adamant belief that shooting a pistol could be more interesting than the complex laser projectile rifle he just showed me. We both walked down to the booth and I examined the pistol on the booth table. It looked like an ordinary pistol with the exception that there was a small red dot sight on top of the rear-sight. The pistol must have been a modified .45 ACP caliber pistol. I unloaded the magazine to inspect the weapon for ammunition and saw that the bullets were in fact .45 ACP and they looked unremarkable. I racked the chamber and aimed for the targets down the range. As I grasped the pistol, the red dot sight prompted me with a holographic screen instructing me on how to use the pistol. I guessed the tutorial was reset for the purposes for my demonstration. The bullets inside the magazine were AI assisted and had inside them, miniature flight guidance systems within the casing of the bullet. Once the tutorial finished on the screen, I aimed down the sight for the head of the target and I pulled the trigger.

The bullet penetrated right in the middle of the forehead of the target. I was impressed with the ability of the bullets to automatically redirect themselves given the forward momentum, velocity, energy and spiraling of the bullet.

“So, how exactly does that work Colonel?” I asked. I unloaded the magazine and emptied the chamber, placing the next bullet in the chamber on the table in front of me along with the pistol.

“It’s impossible to see, but the bullet contains a microchip inside the casing along with microchips inside the pistol itself. The flight guidance systems work in tandem with the pistol to correct your aim by actually adjusting the pistol’s yaw, pitch and roll ever so slightly with your aim to conform to the target that the reticule is aiming at. Within the bullet itself, wings are deployed to adaptively respond and adjust their trajectory to changing aerodynamic conditions along with effects like the Coriolis effect.”

At this point, Von Staufen looked at his holographic wristwatch and I saw the time emerge in the air particles around the watch.

“It’s twelve Heinrich and I still have many more things to show you on this floor, let alone the other three floors. I’m sure you’ll become familiarized with these devices as time moves along. One question however Lieutenant Colonel, are you on any smart drugs?”

While the Colonel asked me this question, I could hear the gears of the laser pulse rifle in the second booth winding and unwinding, the deliberate machinery of death ticking in the hands of the Reich.

“No Colonel, I don’t take any smart drugs. Maybe you could consider nicotine a smart drug, but I just vaporize it for the pleasure I get from it.”

Colonel Von Staufen reached into his pocket and pulled out a laminated packet of two pills. He gave it to me with a big grin on his face and said

“Here, we all take neurocognitive enhancing agents. We only develop the most efficacious and safest drugs. Hitler has approved this undertaking and sees it as a necessity to exponentially develop technologies. We are running out of time to tour the facilities. Here, take these drugs and I'll give you the rest of the tour for the three other floors.”

I looked at Von Staufen in bewilderment, I wasn't about to just take drugs without knowing what I was taking.

“What exactly is the name of this drug and are there any side effects. I know you said they're safe, but what about any extrapyramidal full body side effects?” I asked.

“The name of the substance is TPE-49. It's the latest synthesis of smart drugs from the chemical laboratories downstairs. Our goal is to unite all of our divisions in The Elite Korps to create ultimate technologies for the Reich.”

Von Staufen said, before breathing in deeply to iterate his next statement,

“ In war and in peace.”

Von Staufen then said,

“The Great Beyond, the space beyond Earth, is still uncolonized Heinrich, but I'm sure you knew that already. We must be prepared for eternal warfare against the creatures of this universe.”

Von Staufen looked at me, eyeing me from the bottom upwards, as if to measure me in totality.

“Take the drugs Heinrich. You'll need them.”

Von Staufen said as he unclenched his fist with the pills in his hand. I took the pills without water and swallowed them with a big gulp of saliva.

“How long does it take to work?” I asked.

Von Staufen grinned and said to me “You can expect it to work in fifteen to thirty minutes depending on how much you ate within the last three to four hours. But, we'll talk about that later. Let's get to the third floor laboratories Heinrich.”

Once again, as if in a parade formation, Colonel Von Staufen turned on his heels and speedily escorted me to the main service elevator down to the third floor. This tour was quickly becoming more like a rite of passage, an initiation into something much deeper than the state itself.

The Elite-Korps was the real deep state, a clandestine foundation of the power of the state that was faced with the facade known as the Greater Reich. We reached the elevator and the drugs hadn't kicked in yet, so I asked Von Staufen

“What am I expecting to feel when these drugs kick in, at least in terms of when the ligands effectively bind to their receptor sites? Am I supposed to get high or something like that Colonel?”

Von Staufen turned to me and tilted his eyebrows while dropping his eyelids, as if to express a feeling of sarcasm. He then said

“Ofcourse not you dumpkof! We are soldiers for the Reich, not some vagabonds getting high off the left over change from pedestrians on the street! You’re going to feel something, you’re going to feel like you are unstoppable Heinrich. You’ll feel like you can conquer the world, but, instead of being high per se, the experience will be as if you’re feeling an extended version of your sobriety. You’ll feel like you know that all is possible, you’ll feel as if your knowledge can be exponentiated without hassle, with ease.”

By the time Von Staufen finished explaining TPE-49 to me, we reached the third floor. So far, I was already getting tired of touring the place. Sure, the technology was exciting, but I felt a tremendous pressure to excel and the stress was overbearing, although nothing had been asked of me so far in terms of producing exponentially optimized results. Maybe these drugs would kick in and I would relax, or perhaps as Von Staufen suggested, I would become maniacal and unstoppable. As the elevator doors opened, I started to get a sense that every floor, while minutely different in certain aspects, was foundationally the same in its layout and construction. For such a secretive place, I was expecting more, a lot more.

The Elite-Korps, as their name would suggest, should have been elite, something that has the air of excellence. This place had patina and dust filled laboratories at its worst and at its best, some interesting gadgetry, but not Elite technologies.

What kind of technology were they hiding from me, I thought to myself.

The elevator doors opened.

“Show me around Colonel, I want to see what you’ve developed so far,” I said.

The Colonel lead me from the entryway of the elevator out onto the staging floor of the laboratories.

Von Staufen walked again in his controlled and mechanistic fashion towards the center of the laboratories, dragging me in tow as I struggled to keep up and walk as optimally as he could. I looked about and focused mostly on the back of Von Staufen’s head, bobbing about ever so slightly in unison with his steps. Von Staufen

“Welcome to the Molecular Subsector Heinrich. Here, we are creating the functional molecules which will enable us to further enhance the potential of our soldiers as well as our machines. Let’s go through the basics first. What do you remember about the science of chemistry Heinrich? I know during your time at University you must have studied some chemistry.” asked Von Staufen.

“Not much Colonel, I was a computer engineer. Of course it was important to study chemistry, but it was hardly relevant in my work dealing with computational substrates and software. Functionally, one makes programs with information we have. Not to say I’ve never derived my own equations or thought of the interconnectedness between disparately disjunct variables, but to call myself a chemist, I would say not.”

I replied.

“Where did you go to University, Heinrich?” asked Von Staufen.

“LMU Munich. I was a research scientist researching prototype machine intelligences, but we never had a containment device...” I said, before being interrupted by Colonel Von Staufen.

“You programmers, you’re all so lazy. I bet you’ve done a lot of computational physics calculations haven’t you? Always looking for the easy way out, the path of least resistance if you will..”

I had a good chuckle at Von Staufen’s pithy aphorism but was more curious of what chemicals the Elite-Korps was developing.

“Let me show you how TPE-49 is made Lieutenant Colonel Schriever. You’ll be interested once it kicks in, and then, you’ll know everything about it like it’s your second nature.”

As part of my diet, I had been fasting for roughly sixteen hours a day and eating only after I got home. The effects of the TPE-49 were starting to kick in as I walked with Von Staufen through the cubicled maze of scientist’s offices and interwoven laboratory stations. I was interested in these individualized chemical testing and drug manufacture stations in terms of their functional utility in terms of volumetric space. I had never really seen a laboratory in a cubicle the size one might expect in a standard office setting.

By the time we reached the far end of the laboratory floor, next to the SS administrative offices, I felt a potent psychoactive effect coming on.

In my time at LMU Munich, I partook in the consumption of many psychoactive drugs. TPE-49 felt like a mix between modafinil and cannabis, without cannabis’s mentally foggy qualities. I felt a strong euphoria, as if I was on top of the world, all the while being awake and able to interface with any problem as if I was the solution to all things.

Colonel Von Staufen lied.

I was high and I could tell. I wondered to myself, would I ever get this high again?

“Are you there Heinrich? You seem to be... You’re feeling it aren’t you?” Von Staufen asked

“Yes. I feel unstoppable Colonel. I feel indestructible.” I said.

Von Staufen slightly closed his left eye and opened his right, letting a little more light into it, the right eye dilating as scanned me from the top down.

“That’s what we’re looking for Lieutenant Colonel. We need our best men in the best places, in the best conditions. Now, pay attention, because I’m going to teach you about the chemical manufacture of TPE-49.” Von Staufen said as he pointed to a chemist standing over a pair of optical tweezers with a nanoscope, viewing deep down into the submolecular structure of a set of chemical compounds.

“That chemist in front of us is manipulating the actual molecular ionic and valence bonding of particular atoms to create new substances. We previously thought it that would only be possible to do these things through chemical reactions, but it is now possible to use gamma ray absorptiometry along with gamma ray propagation into materials to actively manipulate and measure the changes in chemical substances, allowing us to create new chemicals precisely at the atomic level.”

It seemed to make sense to me but I needed to know more.

“How, exactly?” I asked.

“Let me explain. As you can see, the chemist is manipulating the nanoscope and the optical tweezers outside of a lead castle. He is interfacing with the system electronically, as a beam of gamma rays radiates the substance, the optical tweezers literally catch the radiated atoms and before expelling them, use the physical scattering of pair production to produce a new isotope of the element on one side of the tweezer and combine it with the conjunctive element on the other side of the tweezer. By doing this, we are able to create unstable isotopes and chemically bind them to other unstable isotopes in the hope that we reach a metastable isotope of a heavier compound. This is how we achieved reaching an island of stability for Elements 116-132.” Von Staufen said.

I looked around the laboratories and asked Von Staufen,

“So, is this what all of the chemists are doing at their stations? What else is done in the laboratories on this floor?”

“We are actively testing these chemicals in heavily insulated chambers on the floor in segmented rooms. As you can see...” Von Staufen pointed up towards the four corners of the room and said “...Those four corners of this room are the heavily insulated and segmented chambers which contain inner anechoic chambers where we test the new chemicals in mass produced quantities...”

I interrupted Von Staufen to ask,

“Well, Colonel. I understand how the chemicals are manipulated and measured atomically and for their first molecular compound synthesis, but, how are these chemicals mass produced?”

Von Staufen was looking visibly annoyed, his face grimacing while I interrupted him.

“Lieutenant Colonel, when a superior is speaking to you, you do not interrupt. If you would let me finish, I was just about to explain how the chemicals are mass produced in the laboratories. Now, the chemicals are manipulated and measured atomically but our method to mass produce them is much simpler. We use a mixture of molecular assembly with physical machines and chemical reactions. The molecular assemblers are still in a very limited prototyping phase, but they have proven their efficacy in ‘printing’ some compounds. We must be very careful Heinrich, we watch the molecular assemblers and make sure they don’t continue assembling or disassembling everything around them. Surely, there is a limit to how much the machine can disassemble its own constituent parts, but if it starts doing that, that’s wasted money, time and a safety hazard.”

“That’s very interesting Colonel. I am really feeling the effects of TPE-49 now, it seems like everything you said made sense beyond my normal capacity to understand and remember things. If I had more information, I could probably start operating these machines and tools myself.” I said.

“That’s the point Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, I want you in top battle ready shape in mind and body. The SS needs intelligent men like you to further civilization, to further the Reich.” Colonel Von Staufen said.

“But, let’s move on to one of the corner chambers so you can see what exactly we’re working on chemically. You’ll be very surprised to see what we’ve accomplished so far.” Von Staufen said.

Von Staufen quickly turned on his heels, as if Hitler were watching his formation stance in a parade, and took me to the upper left hand anechoic testing chamber. I was beginning to notice a pattern here, that the Elite-Korps loved the idea of anechoic chambers. The state suppresses the voices of the people and in the trapped reverberations, it silences them, it smothers them with a form of ‘acoustic’ chloroform. Once they’re incapacitated, Hitler pulls the trigger with his henchmen. But here I was again, faltering in my will. The Reich was within me and without me and my screams would never be heard. It was either I would give my all to the state or I would find a way to take all from the state, a portent omen, or prediction of things to come.

“Are you there Heinrich? It seems like there’s something on your mind. You need to maintain attention at all times Lieutenant Colonel, you are on duty.” Von Staufen said, snapping me out of my daydream.

Somehow, I managed to automatically follow Von Staufen to the chamber, isolating all that the room had to offer me and the people within it. The anechoic chamber was huge and filled with soot, debris and exploded material scattered about.

“Here, we are testing the new chemical constitution of various battery prototypes. We’ve settled with heavily saline ‘water-in-salt’ batteries which are the safest form of battery we’ve managed to optimize thus far. The reason we need the large acoustic anechoic chamber, like in the other floors of the facility is because of the sheer explosive force of the devices we create Heinrich. The reverberations are captured by the acoustic dampening material, the acoustic foam wedges on the inner sides of the square chamber are attenuated to prevent the shockwaves effecting the structural stability of the lower floors of the laboratories.” Von Staufen said.

“Why water-in-salt batteries, Colonel? Don’t heavier element constituting compounds have a higher chemical potential energy? How are your saline electrolytes optimized for the prevention of corrosion as well as energy output. Don’t get me wrong, I love the safety aspect of saline batteries, but these have been around for so long Colonel. What is new about these batteries we are manufacturing?” I asked.

Von Staufen’s eyes shifted to me after observing the chamber and inspecting it.

“Come with me towards the center of the chamber and I’ll show you how the batteries work. But, I am impressed so far Lieutenant Colonel. I’m not sure if it’s the drugs talking or if that is your inquisitive intelligence, but you certainly have a mind for physics.” Von Staufen jovially said.

I felt offended but I held my tongue. Certainly the drugs had taken a hold of my intellectual capacity, but everything I had ever known or learned had led to this moment. I was much more intelligent than being reducible to a drug taking regurgitator of facts. As we walked towards the center of the chamber, like in the other anechoic chambers I had been in, I could feel and hear my heart beat. The insulative properties of this particular chamber made me sweat and feel uncomfortable.

At the center of the chamber was a confabulated contraption of steel pipes, a massive steel box, release valves and the smell of salt in the air.

“What the hell am I looking at Colonel? This looks like some sort of steel maze of pipes which I am assuming are flowing with highly concentrated saline solution? What about these large boxes on the diametrically opposing sides of the device?” I asked.

“Lieutenant Colonel, this is our prototype method for energy efficiency increase via a semi solid electrolyte interphase. The interphase is in the right box, acting as the battery itself obviously. So, there is an alternating current generator connected to an engine on the right side, next to the interphase itself. The heat of the engine and the ac generator causes salt water to travel from the reservoir in the back of the device throughout the steel-tantalum alloy pipes to increase the energy efficiency of the engine and the alternating current generator...” Von Staufen said, before I interrupted him.

“Excuse me Colonel, but wouldn’t the system reach thermodynamic equilibrium quickly? How exactly would the reservoir, unless connected to a larger ocean or lake, be able to process so much heat without stagnating the flow of the charged saline solution?”

Von Staufen’s face was becoming red hot from my constant interruptions and angrily he said

“*Listen dumpkoff.* You can’t keep interrupting me, your superior here. There is a chain of command, like I said before. If you would let me fucking finish my explanation, I could tell you how that is prevented. We have managed to pool our resources across the lower third and fourth floor level laboratories to create a zero point energy resonator derived from our experiments with the Casimir effect. It’s all in the prototype phase, but imagine if you will, the zero point energy resonator acting as the effective reservoir of the endless ocean that is the vacuum. The heat energy is literally being dissipated through space and time via the

atmosphere, but could be used in a vacuum, well, albeit less efficiently. The thing is, this effect with one resonator is so small that it requires all of this piping and re-routing, along with a large reservoir to provide a somewhat marginal increase in energy efficiency.

You'll notice Heinrich that, in this place, in this reality, there are laws which can never be broken. The laws of physics, the laws of the state, the laws of time. We are bound by the ties that bind, bound by blood, bound by Gott, bound by the laws of physics, bound by our obligations, the list goes on and on..."

As Josef spoke, I saw within his eyes the same fear the scientists had in theirs. I saw the ties that bind bound us to all, to Hitler, to everything which absolves us. There was no escaping this place, even with mein Gott in my heart and mind. It was too much to take all at once, I didn't care about any sort of energy efficiency increase in a localized system. I cared about the Reich and I cared about the world that could have been without Nazi Germany. I was bound to the future as I am bound to the present and the ties that bound me to the past. The fires of Germany burned in the past as they burn now, burning down everything except the supreme authority of the state and the extended Caucasian family. Heil Hitler I thought, free me from the ties that bind I thought. I no longer wished to be bound.

Von Staufen was still talking while I dozed off into the metaphysical forays of what it means to be alive, inspired by the words of Von Staufen. Somehow, these drugs weren't working as perfectly as I wanted them to. I still heard what he was talking about

"... And, that's why it's not truly an increase in energy efficiency Heinrich. The localized system sees an increase in energy efficiency, but the overall system maintains thermodynamic equilibrium. Essentially, that energy is being transferred from the local system to the outer fluid dynamical system of the atmosphere and then through the vacuum itself, which is not fluid dynamical. Do you understand Heinrich?"

"Yes Colonel, I understand. Is this all you wanted to show me on this floor?" I asked.

"Yes, yes it is, Lieutenant Colonel. Follow me. It is getting extremely hot and uncomfortable in here, let's move to the fourth floor. Once we are done with the fifth floor, you'll be given a fifteen minute reprieve to have a cigarette outside or vaporize your nicotine if you'd like. Also, I would like to see you by your desk no later than 10 minutes after your break, we must formalize your employment here as well as teach you about the system for the paperwork. There really isn't much paperwork per se, it's all automated but we still like to keep physical copies. Hitler is old school, he's been around for a long time. His authority supersedes mine and the state's authority. Anyway, let's go to the fourth floor Lieutenant Colonel."

The idea of a cigarette sounded tempting. The small cigarillos I had in my pocket next to my vaporizer often gave me a better hit that was more satisfying. I always smoked when I was stressed and I was curious to see the effects of direct nicotine administration in conjunction with TPE-49. I always had nicotine in my system, in my sleep, in the waking hours and in the flurry of life in between. I followed the Colonel back across the third floor chemical laboratories to the main service elevators. In the elevator, the Colonel stood at parade rest stance, ever-ready as if he were to be inspected by Hitler himself.

I was beginning to notice something about Von Staufen and his demeanor. In the hyper-sensitive state that TPE-49 put me in, it made me induce connections between things I had never seen before. The way Von Staufen's eyes darted around when he spoke to me, the way his body language lurched out towards me when speaking to me directly--it all gave off the impression that the Colonel was very attached to his power and within him, he used that authority to get things done. There was nothing that wasn't serious about this Colonel, who was probably a war-hardened veteran of the past wars. Meanwhile, I myself, was a fresh designer baby of the 2020s. I asked Von Staufen in the stifling musk of the elevator,

"Were you in the, Second World War, Colonel? You seem to have the demeanor of a war hardened veteran, perhaps a black-to-gold soldier-officer."

"Yes Heinrich, It may not seem like it from the rejuvenative therapies developed in the early 2000s that you can't tell how old I am, but yes, I was in the Second World War. I was in the Wehrmacht, the 88th Infantry Division. After Operation Barbarossa in 1941 and our embarrassing defeats on the Russian front lines, I was transferred from Signals to Grenadier-Regiment 248, fighting directly on the front lines. And yes, I went from black to gold but not without much hardship Lieutenant Colonel. War is hell as they say Heinrich and the 88th Infantry Division was no different, I, I don't want to talk about it. Besides, the elevator door has been open for quite a while now, let me show you the floor." Von Staufen said as he rattled off his words, speedily, nervously and angrily.

We walked out of the elevator and stood in front of the laboratory floor. Here, the ground floor plan was entirely dedicated to what seemed to be computers, servers, and some forms of computers I couldn't recognize. My inner programmer and technology geek became ecstatic, I was going to be on this floor a lot, I thought to myself. And so would Karl Von Neumann, I was wondering exactly where he was as well.

"So, Heinrich, this floor is entirely dedicated to our pursuit of exponential gains in computational power, machine learning, artificial general intelligence and quantum computing. We have made quite a few breakthroughs, especially since we have Karl Von Neumann on our team now. Let's go speak to Von Neumann, he has a small office on the periphery of the floor, on the far right upperhand corner of the floor."

Von Staufen pointed in the direction of Von Neumann's office with a knife hand gesture. The sound of whirring computer fans elevated the din of the room and the temperature of the room was slightly cooler than the other floors, probably to not compromise the integrity of the computer hardware under stress. All along the center of the floor and the periphery, computer scientists with white boards were writing down algorithms and code, chatting amongst themselves. They looked at Von Staufen periodically, as if to check if he were observing them. When we reached Von Neumann's office, his door was slightly ajar.

His slicked back hair and his face reminded me of a Jew from the past, a notorious Jew, Kurt Godel, in fact, Von Neumann looked a lot like him. You know, honestly, Von Neumann was more like a superpositioning of Godel and Schrödinger. I knew Von Neumann was pure, but the resemblance was uncanny. His level of intelligence matched Godel's, but fortunately he was not

Jewish. The Jewish question still ran in my mind and as I thought of Godel and Schrödinger, I felt some guilt and remorse for the Jews. They were as bad as Hitler said, but they needed to be forgiven. The secular Jewish paraphernalia I had at home was interesting, a glimpse into the Western world before the Nazis, before totalizing National Socialism engulfed the world.

As we walked in through the door, we saw Karl typing vigorously on his computer with his face very close to his triple monitor, encroaching him on three sides and oriented diametrically opposed and in front of his face kind of set-up. He stopped typing and looked towards us, swiveled in his chair towards us and said,

“Yes, what may I do for you Lieutenant Colonel Schriever and Colonel Von Staufen?”

Von Staufen then said

“I’m just showing Lieutenant Colonel Schriever around the laboratories, but we would like to speak to you Karl. How has your first week been here?”

Von Neumann grabbed his coffee on the table, took a sip and said,

“It’s been good Colonel. We have been working on recursively self improving algorithms for our protosentient AGI but we keep hitting dead ends each time we compile the source code within the anechoic chamber. I’ve been trying to multi-task with physics research as well as my computer engineering endeavors.”

“Take your time Karl, there is no pressure to get to the technological singularity imminently. We want to make sure this is done right, without sacrificing everything we’ve built up so far, the threat of an artificial general intelligence is too great. Explain precisely the roadblocks we are hitting and what I can do as Colonel to fix this issue,” Von Staufen said.

Von Neumann shifted in his chair to get more comfortable and began a gesturing motion as if to imply that he wanted us to come in closer and listen in more clearly. He then said as Von Staufen and I stepped in closer,

“Well, computationally we are facing a hard problem of consciousness. We don’t exactly know how the artificial general intelligence will consciously arise out of this substrate from its neural network source code. Either we are creating a zombie, the illusion of an intelligence or we are creating a sentient being. Functionally, as I’m sure Lieutenant Colonel Schriever knows, programming is very different from human consciousness in so far as we understand it. Humans aren’t binary machines with on and off states, ones and zeroes if you will. We have combined my work, Lieutenant Colonel Schriever’s doctoratorial work and the work of the Computations Subsector engineers.

We are still at an impasse on how exactly to proceed with deriving an in silico model. Any suggestions Lieutenant Colonel Schriever? Your proto-sentient designs and algorithms proved to advance the field exponentially, at least in terms of illusory narrow intelligence.”

I stood there, kind of aghast that Karl Von Neumann of all people was stumped on an idea for deriving a proto-sentient AGI that was actually conscious. Also, I felt insulted. I said,

“Why not try the polychronous-hierarchical neurons within the brain? By try, I mean insert microscopic electrodes into the brain, or even better, nanoscopic electrodes and divert the neuronal action potentials by inputting an algorithm on a computer into the brain. By brute forcing your way in, we can detect the presence of the electrical stimulation and see how the ‘down-the-chain’ neurons in the biological neuronal networks respond to the electrical stimulation. If commanding the polychronous-hierarchical neurons forces the other neurons to respond by distributing the action potentials and neurotransmitters through those other neurons as if it were an analog to digital conversion of that stimulation, then we know how the distribution of the action potentials in terms of conscious reaction to electrical stimulation works via stimulation of those polychronous-hierarchical neurons.”

Both Von Staufen and Von Neumann looked at me as if I was crazy. Then Karl said,

“Heinrich. How are we supposed to fabricate microscopic electrodes that will fit directly on a neuron? Those are too large and are very antiquated. I think we should pursue the nanoscopic electrode route to see if your theory works, you know kind of like the prototype neural net you tested today, I’m sure. One large problem is that at very small nanometer lengths, electrical leakage starts to become a problem. We might have those quantum mechanical effects targeting other neurons and relaying false data which might give a false negative for your hypothesis.

I think we should make the electrodes about seven nanometers in its three dimensional volume per their respective axes. Another problem is what sort of animal will we test? Testing mice might give us a mouse level proto-sentient AGI, but we can’t test on pure blooded Aryans can we? What about the white *untermensch*? They’re still white, but not as pure.”

I didn’t like where Von Neumann was directing the conversation. I didn’t feel like it was necessary to subject humans, especially white people to being converted into biological flesh computers. I couldn’t let my superior, Von Staufen know how I truly felt about the oppressive nature of the state of affairs. Instead, I said,

“I think it would be better to test with mice and move slowly with this idea Karl. If we have a human level intelligence, it will possibly recursively self improve its intelligence until it is an artificial superintelligence. We can’t contain those yet, we don’t have a complete picture of the nature of reality. We need to know all of the laws of physics before we make a determination on whether or not a better anechoic chamber can be fabricated.

The reason being is, with a theory of everything, we can use a mouse level AGI to calculate all of the possibilities that can happen in terms of what an artificial superintelligence can physically do...”

Von Staufen interrupted me and said,

“I am ordering you to follow the protocol we originally set out for you when we hired you Von Neumann. I want every iteration of an AI and AGI you create to be compiled within the chamber and destroyed in the case this thing gets out of control. We’ve spent enough time here Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, let’s move onto the fifth floor. I’m sure you know all about the

things we are working on, you and Von Neumann invented most of our techniques! Well, at least in the Computational Subsector.”

Once again, like an automated soldier, Von Neumann turned on his heels and in his precise way of calculating his stride, he walked me towards the service elevators. In the short elevator ride down to the last floor, I asked Von Staufen,

“Why didn’t you show me the rest of the floor? I was interested in what they’re doing up there.”

Von Staufen, with his arms crossed in front of him and his fingers interlocked with one another, said

“Heinrich, we spent too much time talking to Von Neumann. He’s pretty much in charge of the fourth floor, even as a private contractor, I recognize his ability to rationally figure out the problems with the Elite-Korps computing projects. Besides, you will be interacting regularly with Karl anyway, I am sure you will get to know our computing projects much better. As Von Neumann said, a lot of it is derivative of your work and his work. Ah, the elevator has arrived to the fifth floor. Come with me.”

As we left the elevator, I was not surprised once again by the layout of the floor. It was the same square layout that the other floors had, along with the service ramps that were daisy chained up to the ground floor level. I could see a bunch of machines, tooling equipment, 3D printers, what I assumed to be molecular assemblers, and other variants of manufacturing equipment.

“Here, Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, we manufacture the devices we design. This floor is entirely dedicated to the safe manufacturing and testing of the finalized concepts and devices we create. Hitler frequently requests progress updates in the form of spreadsheets to cross reference our progress, our budgets, our finalized creations and other metrics. None of that is done by hand anymore obviously, but we just input our statistics and the computers do the rest of the work for us. It’s been like that for a long time. Anyway, what I would like you to see is our latest creation. But first, come with me and come pick up some personal protective equipment. This floor is somewhat like a warehouse or factory floor and could be dangerous if you’re not careful.”

Colonel Von Staufen led me to the right of the room to a long line of lockers, closets and racks. He opened up one of the closets and pulled out a large full body suit covered in some sort of matte fabric. It had a hood with a large black visor and he then explained to me

“We’ve developed thermally non conductive, electrically non conductive and shrapnel resistant personal protective equipment Heinrich. While nothing can be completely impervious from damage, this gear will help you in the Manufactory Subsector when you inspect the work going on here.”

Colonel Von Staufen suited himself up in a rather large one size fits all suit. He then turned around and asked me to zip up his suit. I obliged. I took my turn getting my suit, getting into the boots, the gloves and making sure the Colonel zipped me up as well.

“The filters in the suit are of the highest quality Heinrich. In the case that you needed to survive an all-out biological or chemical weapons attack, these suits could protect you for years. The active scrubbing filters within the suit don’t function through regular chemical reactions. We have developed a method of an active chemical reaction which absorbs the material coming through the filter and is extruded through a breathable mesh on the outer skin of the suit. The suit’s fabric within itself contains more reagents for the actual filtration of these particulates and it is cycled in and out by an internal vacuum powered by a small nanoscopic grid of batteries on the outer soles of your boots.

These batteries are connected to kinetic energy convertors which use the power of your walking to charge the batteries and keep the system going. Come with me Heinrich, that’s all I need to tell you about the suit.”

Colonel Von Staufen lead me down several aisles of machinery, scientists and machinists fabricating equipment. Sparks from electric rotary blades were flying, dust was in the air being quickly sucked in through filtration systems in the ceiling amongst other things. It felt like I was back in the 20th century, from what I’ve read about it. This was a factory in the truest sense of the word, without complete and full automation. Even in a state of technological superiority, humans were still required to manufacture things, although there were many narrow-AI robots on the floor automating tasks, just like Colonel Von Staufen spoke about. After walking down three aisles and four rows of machinery, men and equipment, we reached what I assumed was a molecular assembler.

“This is all I want to show you on this floor Heinrich. You will be working with molecular assemblers frequently in your time in the Korps. The molecular assembler was once a prototype that we first designed in 2054, the first year the Elite-Korps came into being. Although this is classified, you are now privy to this information as you are the second in command here. The Reich was stagnating under the free market and we needed the combined impetus of the state and the free market to accelerate Germany out of technological destitution. We are quickly reaching the carrying capacity of this planet Heinrich, as you very well know. The advancements made in science since 1945 haven’t been enough.

The molecular assembler has radicalized the means of production in the laboratories and will soon come to market, although I’m not trying to pitch you on it, it’s just the truth Lieutenant Colonel.”

“How does it work, Colonel?” I asked. I wasn’t really interested in the Colonel’s drugged up utopian vision of a future Reich and I was certainly conflicted with where the party was taking the planet.

It was ever present on my mind that if the Nazis found my paraphernalia that I would be summarily executed. But I couldn’t let my resolve falter in front of the Colonel. Any sign of weakness, any sign of discontent, any more signs of or blatant insubordination would be sniffed out quickly and I would be summarily executed. I kept a straight face and listened to the Colonel as he explained how the molecular assembler worked.

“The molecular assembler functions through prototype nano-robots. Nanobots for short, we’ve been developing them schematically in the cybernetics and robotics laboratory on the first

underground floor of the laboratories. Essentially, the molecular assembler is no different than a 3D printer, except instead of adding or extruding like a 3D printer, base elemental compounds, molecules and stable elements are used to craft molecules atom by atom. It was once thought as impossible to overcome the strength of the four fundamental forces, but, by using the electromagnetic force carrier, the electron, it is possible to guide electrons into orbital levels easing the manufacturing of compounds. The nanobots, while large in scale, can exert electrical effects with photon and gamma ray emission before they are expended and guide atoms into place.

It's a rough predictor of where we will be in the future Heinrich. It won't be long until we are using pico and femtotechnology in order to accomplish our goals, but we shouldn't get ahead of ourselves. Let me demonstrate an example of a commonly produced molecule we use here in the laboratories, something simple, a molecule of graphene. The molecule will consist of a 99.9:1 ratio of ^{12}C to ^{13}C , to demonstrate the difference between a pure molecule of ^{12}C in terms of thermal conductivity."

The outside of the molecular assembler looked like a standard 3D printer, with a touch screen and an API I was unfamiliar with. It was about the size of an old school lathe, presumably to contain samples of stable elements and compounds used to create new molecules and allotropes of certain elements. Colonel Von Staufen was flicking between menus when he finally settled on the periodic table of elements and selected Carbon. He was given a menu of allotropes, he selected graphene and the ratio of isotopes. A loud whirring noise proceeded his confirmation of the selection and from the glass outside, I could see the chemical injectors inserting the carbon into the atmosphere of the printer.

As the fine dust settled in the air, Heinrich proceeded to press a red button on the touch screen in which the nanobots were injected into the fluid suspension. The air inside the box was electrolyzed which enabled the nanobots to fly, travel and begin exerting electromagnetic discharges on the structure of the atoms themselves.

"For the purpose of this demonstration, we're simply rearranging the physical structure of the fluid suspension, so there will ultimately be no covalent or ionic bonding. It isn't necessary, nor is it possible with two isotopes of the same element, as you may remember from your chemistry courses." Von Staufen said.

After fifteen seconds, the entire process was almost over. The fluid suspension, now structured in a thin sheet of graphene only a few centimeters in width, length and height, slowly glided in the ionized air towards an extraction door in which the new molecular object could be analyzed and used. Von Staufen disengaged the ionization process and the nanobots flew back into the inner chambers of the molecular assembler, ready to produce when the time called for it. Colonel Von Staufen pulled out the thin sheet of graphene and gave it to me to inspect. It smelled like hot graphite, or charcoal, but it had a more refined sensibility to it, like as if there was no coarseness in the particulate in my olfactory perception of the graphene.

"Take a break Heinrich, I'll see you back in your first floor office in an hour. It's only been about two hours since you've been here anyway, but still, it's a lot to take in and remember. I'm sure even with TPE-49, human memory is susceptible to its genetic flaws. Go smoke a cigarette or something, I'll be down here for a while and in an hour, like I said, I'll see you in your office." Von Staufen said.

I saluted the Colonel and he saluted back. I made my way to the elevators back to the ground floor. I walked outside of the building, towards the parking lot and took out one of the cigarillos I had in my pocket along with a lighter. I lit up the cigarillo and took a deep inhale of the tobacco smoke. The effect of the nicotine was synergistic with the TPE-49, leaving me in a dizzying state of euphoria and contentedness. I was now fully indoctrinated into the deep state, the gears of control, the Elite-Korps.

Chapter Three: Exponential Gains

July 2nd, 2055

Research and development at the Elite Korps laboratories was exponentially accelerating with each passing month. In the short time between when I first arrived, assumed my duties as second in command and now, we developed and manufactured everything that was once a work in progress prototype. Nanoscopic electrodes, neural nets, exoskeletons, a protosentient artificial general intelligence, the recoil-less weapons systems, the self guided munitions targeting systems, the saline batteries, self powered nanobots and much more. The fifth floor manufactory was in overdrive and without regulatory oversight by the overt government that existed above the underground.

The world we once knew on the outside was stagnant, competing against the world's greatest minds and lacking in degrees of freedom in pursuing exponential gains.

Although the summers in Germany were still sweltering hot, Germany and the greater Reich in the late twentieth century shifted the discourse and ultimately the trajectory of the planet's

climate systems towards a human-controlled climate. All weather was in stasis, a glorious equilibrium between the needs and desires of a thousand year Reich and the state of nature. Today, I was going to test the first manufactured set of exoskeletons with Colonel Von Staufen and Karl Von Neumann, although Von Neumann wasn't supposed to be involved with the military hardware, per se. As a private citizen, he had the right to own weaponry, but the right to operate classified hardware and that private right to bear arms were mutually exclusive. Von Neumann told me that the stress of having the state expect of him incredible things was getting to him, so I made an exception for today.

As I finished my pre-duty cigarette in the morning, I thought of Von Neumann and his desire to escape. At this point, I wanted to escape too. The constant pressure of taking nootropic drugs, stimulants and working long hours was getting to me. The exoskeletons we built would be the perfect release valve for the stress we had to face and endure. I made my way to the robotics and cybernetics laboratory to speak to Colonel Von Staufen to suggest that we and Von Neumann go test the exoskeletons in The Black Forest, to release our stress.

Exiting the elevator to the Cybernetics Subsector, the laboratory was in a frenetic flurry of productivity. More schematics, more designs, and more prototypes were being worked on, with their rates of acceleration in productive capacity accelerating. At this point I was losing track of the work orders and production quotas. I was becoming more detached from the actual science of what was being produced and became more like a taskmaster, a master with the whip of the state, a person I didn't want to become.

I saw Colonel Von Staufen at a workbench with a tablet in his hand, documenting the progress an engineer was making by modifying a neural-nanobot interface that augmented the users of exoskeletons with an artificial intranet in the Elite-Korps laboratories. Instead of having the need for a heads up display, the nanobots could literally signal the brain with information quantum mechanically, instantaneously, through quantum entanglement with the Elite Korps servers.

The technological progress of The Elite-Korps was getting out of hand and there was nothing that could stop us, except death from exhaustion and being overworked. As I approached Colonel Von Staufen, I saluted him and he saluted back after seeing me in his peripheral vision. He put the tablet down on the workbench and said to me,

“Good morning Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, I trust that you've taken your daily ration of TPE-49 and you are ready for duty?”

“Yes I have Colonel, but I ask of you one thing this morning..” I said before being interrupted by Von Staufen.

“What would that be Lieutenant Colonel, what do you want to do?”

I smiled at the Colonel and said,

“ I think we should take the exoskeletons out into the forest, set up some targets and do some shooting. Just to relieve some stress and test out the new gear we've got. What do you think Colonel?”

The Colonel darted his eyes to the right and said,

“Heinrich, we are in command here. We cannot be derelict of duty at any time. I can approve for you two or three hours off to go into the forest yourself or with anyone you would like to go with, so long as you keep the gear in pristine condition, but that’s IT Heinrich!

That is public property, it is owned by the Reich, not you. But yes, I think it would be interesting to hear how our new equipment performs in real world situations. Who do you want to take with you, besides me?”

“I was thinking of bringing along Karl. He’s always so tense working on a solution for creating the ultimate AGI, the man needs to loosen up. His bootstraps might be a little too tight, impeding his ability to get his blood to where it is really needed.

I think it might boost his morale to give him some reprieve from the stressful work we do, Colonel.”

Colonel Von Staufen crossed his arms and said

“Von Neumann isn’t authorized to commandeer military hardware, Heinrich, and you know that. But, I can make an exception just as long as you two don’t do anything crazy and get caught. A five mile radius in all directions around this area of The Black Forest has been cordoned off from the rest of the population, so they already know that we’re up to something here. We can’t have private citizens finding out that we are exponentially advancing and developing these technologies.”

“Understood Colonel.” I said.

“Go get Von Neumann, come back to this floor to retrieve and mount the exoskeletons. The first manufactured models we have need some more extensive testing anyway, before we start mass producing them, loaning them to the SS and the Wehrmacht.”

I saluted Colonel Von Staufen and headed towards the elevators. I went down to the fourth floor to meet up with Von Neumann in his office. I made my way through the hectic laboratory floor to Von Neumann’s office. He was there, as per the usual, typing away at his keyboard and arched over his keyboard looking at his screen.

As I walked in, Von Neumann turned to me and said

“How are you Lieutenant Colonel Schriever? It’s only 9:15 AM, you can’t be here for the daily progress report already can you? I’ve managed to get some programming done, but I’m nowhere near the 2,000 line quota for today.”

I scanned Von Neumann’s face for a second and I could tell, he like myself, was getting tired of his work here. Rejuvenative therapy could only help so much to stop psychological stressors and a lack of sleep, I thought to myself.

“No Karl, I’m not here for that. I’m here to relieve you of your duty for two or three hours. I want you to come test the latest exoskeleton mechanized suits with me. I invited Colonel Von Staufen but he needs to maintain command of the laboratories while I’m gone.”

Von Neumann smiled, became excited, giggled, and laughed like a little German school girl.

“Yes! I accept! Get me the hell out of here Heinrich, this is becoming so stressful and boring. If I could make two or three hours of my workday disappear, just for today atleast, I would feel so much better. Does this mean I can take my lunch right after we come back?”

I rolled my eyes, as if I knew Karl would ask a question like this and I said,

“Yes Karl, you can take your lunch right afterwards. I’m all about boosting the morale of all who are working at the laboratories. Now, come with me so we can suit up in the exoskeletons.”

Von Neumann got out of his seat, we walked out of the office and he locked his office door. After taking the elevators up to the first underground floor, we walked up to the Colonel, who was in the middle of inspecting a filtration system for a fully isolated exoskeleton. I called out his name and saluted him. He looked up from his tablet, put the tablet on a workbench, saluted and said,

“So, Karl, Lieutenant Colonel Schriever told me of his plans for today. I want to make something clear to the both of you, not just you. If any civilian is found in that forest and they see what equipment you are working with, you are to call out to them, detain them and bring them back here. Under no circumstances will you fire on any civilian, kill any wildlife or leave any indelible evidence that our mechanized exoskeleton suits were out there in that forest. Do you understand?”

“Yes Colonel, I understand.” I said.

Colonel Von Staufen folded his arms and gave me an expression of sternness. He then said

“So iterate to me what exactly you plan on doing with Karl in that forest and how you plan on not leaving any evidence so we can both be perfectly clear, Lieutenant Colonel.”

Because of the TPE-49, I began making connections in my mind exponentially faster than ever before. It took me less than one hundred milliseconds, by my approximation to come up with a satisfying answer.

“Well, we don’t have to go far Colonel. Alert the military guard around the outpost that we’ll be within hearing distance of the laboratory base. We’ll make sure to harvest any trees we shoot at and leave them outside in the parking lot. Maybe the original fantasy of running through the forest is a little contrived.”

The Colonel unfolded his arms and said

“Good, that’s what I like to hear Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, I like hearing well thought out and rational ideas. Now, get into the forest and go and enjoy yourself. You’ve got at most three hours

to do whatever you would like to do in order to test the suits, whatever you want. You are relieved of duty and, uh, you as well Von Neumann.”

The Colonel picked up the tablet and turned back to the workbench to analyze the filtration system. I turned to Karl Von Neumann and smiled. He looked back and it felt like I knew what he was feeling too, utter joy and relief. We made our way to the right hand side of the first floor laboratory to suit up in the exoskeletons. The exoskeletons were fifteen feet tall and in a primitive prototype phase, relative to their final fully automated versions. They were like frameworks of what would eventually have more bullet and laser proof armor. These exoskeletons were powered by the saline batteries we had developed along with high energy efficiency solar panels which were on the top of the exoskeleton helmet and shoulder pads.

The method for energy efficiency increase was utilized here in a much sleeker form, where the water-in-salt saline solution was funneled and flowing through the exoskeleton suit so as to convert the residual heat generated by kinetic movement into electricity to charge the batteries.

Two large foot-pads deployed once you pressed a button to mount the exoskeleton. I pressed the button and strapped myself in the exoskeleton. In front of me, an augmented reality visor projected holographically in the space in front of my eyes. Von Neumann strapped himself in and started moving around in the exoskeleton

“It feels like a natural extension of myself, Lieutenant Colonel. I feel like I am now part of the machine,” Karl Von Neumann said.

His words eerily echoed in my mind as we made our way through the service ramps to the outside world. At this point, I had assumed that Colonel Von Staufen warned the military guards about what we were going to do, presumably in the name of a national security interest, the tests were necessary. We sprinted up the service ramps and you could hear the pneumatics of the exoskeleton contracting and expanding fluid, simulating the bones, ligaments and tendons of a human body. Outside, the midday sun was bright and the heat overwhelming. I began to sweat and I then told Karl,

“Let’s make our way to the fence in the back of the parking lot. I assume everyone has arrived for their daily shift already, so we are fairly conspicuous at the moment. To minimize any unwanted attention, let’s calculate how far we need to be to be within hearing range of the guards, but not the military personnel inside the laboratory base.”

As I said that, the visor and suit’s AI systems automatically engaged. On the holographic visor, a distance of one kilometer was calculated and a small clearing in the Black Forest was programmed as our destination. Karl and I ran down the columns of cars towards the seven and a half meter fence, which seemed scalable for our suits.

“How are we supposed to get over this Heinrich, sorry, I mean Lieutenant Colonel Schriever? I hope you’re not seriously suggesting we just jump over this extremely high fence. Can the springs in the exoskeleton suit absorb and redirect that much impact?”

Karl Von Neumann had a point, but I was confident in the structural stability of the exoskeleton and its capability in absorbing and redirecting all of the force we were about to put on it. Besides, this stress testing was subject to military oversight and reporting.

We weren't entirely doing this for fun, but for serious reasons as well.

"Yes. Let's get a running start and jump over this fence. I'll go first." I said.

I looked back at Karl Von Neumann and beads of sweat were dripping down his forehead, along with an expression of pure disbelief and discontentment. His eyebrows furled and forehead wrinkled, I could tell he was clearly stressed. I walked back about fifty meters, in between the columns of parked cars and sprinted towards the fence, jumping some ten meters before barreling over the fence and accelerating towards the ground. I hit the ground with such a tremendous force that indentions were left in the topsoil.

All of this energy would surely charge my suit for another five to six hours, as a lot of force was imparted on the individual kinetic-chemical energy convertors. I looked back to Karl, through the grid of the chain link and barbed wire fence to see Von Neumann hesitating to run and jump on the other side.

"Don't be a coward! You can do it Karl! Just run and jump! I survived!"

Karl wiped the sweat off of his brow and forehead and sprinted towards the fence, barreling over the top with adequate clearance to not get tangled in the barbed wire. He landed next to my indentations and proceeded to say

"You're fucking crazy Heinrich. I don't know why you or I thought this would be a good idea. You're going to get both of us killed! Next time, we're walking through the front entrance. Radio in Colonel Von Staufen and tell him that in two to three hours we'll be coming through the front gates."

I grabbed Karl's hand and pulled him up from his exoskeleton's kneeling position and said

"Don't you enjoy the adrenaline rush of danger Karl? There's no surety in life but the rush of death."

Von Neumann sighed as I proceeded to radio in the Colonel.

"Colonel, we will be going through the front gates when we come back. I want you to cordon off the area to make sure no one who doesn't have a top secret clearance sees what we've got."

"Understood Lieutenant Colonel Schriever. Everyone here has some form of clearance, but there are civilians who we can't trust with top secret information here. I'll talk to you about that at some later time. We have to sniff out the saboteurs, they're amongst our ranks."

I cut off power to the radio and proceeded to run into The Black Forest, with Karl yelling from behind,

“You’re crazy Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, you’re out of your mind! Wait for me!”

Five minutes later, we made our way into the clearing in the forest. This clearing was a designated area for a new laboratory complex for the Elite-Korps. It wasn’t exactly a fully clear staging ground, the clearing was sparsely populated with pine trees in the center of the clearing. In late June, the Elite-Korps used its newly manufactured nanobots to disintegrate the trees into molecular compounds and later, elements for the molecular assemblers, getting rid of the need for a large logging operation and the associated labor that came with clearing the forest. Karl and I made our way towards the center of the clearing to use the few remaining trees as target practice in our two hour escape from the laborious grind of the Elite-Korps.

I reached behind my back to attach the .45 ACP caliber machine guns to my exoskeleton arms. The guns fit into interlocking slides which were secured with a bolt on both sides that could be released with a middle finger side button on the gun grip controllers that were attached to the large machine guns. Karl did the same and said to me,

“Let’s unload some lead into these fucking trees.”

I looked at the trees through the holographic visor and a reticle popped up on the augmented reality screen. I pulled the triggers on the gun controllers and unloaded half of a twenty bullet magazine of the five hundred rounds I had in the automatically reloading stock of the machine gun. The magazine recoiled out of the gun and slid into a compartment where it would be salvaged and reused. I didn’t even have to aim the gun properly for it to hit precisely and accurately. By the time I expended half of the magazine, the tree was cut in half by the precise targeting.

Von Neumann, targeting some trees and in a state of exhilaration said,

“Whoo wee! I love these fucking things man, they’re such deadly killing machines! Imagine when these things are fully automated.”

I was seeing a side of Von Neumann I had never seen before. I knew he was slightly braggadocious and confident, but he seemed very reserved in the laboratories. I guess the day I interviewed him at the SS offices he was trying to leave a good impression on me. That impression still stuck, but he changed when the pressure started surmounting on him. We stuck around in the forest for another hour and a half before we started getting bored of testing out the exoskeletons.

In our testing, we tested the maximum velocity the exoskeletons could sustain while sprinting and their ability to brake when we wanted them to. Both the maximum sustained velocity of the exoskeleton suits was around 20 kilometers per hour and they could sustain a braking speed of 3 meters per second, which was incredibly jarring even with the gyroscopes and actuators redirecting the force of the forward momentum back into the kinetic-potential-chemical energy generators.

As we made our way back into the laboratories, the Colonel was informed over radio that we would be coming back in and he came to meet us at the service ramps to the first underground laboratory floor.

“These things are extremely dirty. Seems like you two did some important testing today. I want notations of everything that happened typed and filed in a report from both of you explaining what exactly you tested and how the exoskeletons worked.”

Looking down at the Colonel, I saw how much larger in stature I was than him and if I really wanted to, I could squash him like a bug under the large footpads of the exoskeleton. I held back this primal urge, like most people felt at some point in their lives, since I knew that the Colonel was not my enemy. He was a friend and a good friend at that, but I tried to keep my work and personal life separate. Yet still, I felt some suspicion about him. This fear I had about most people was unwarranted and unchecked. They hid secrets that I could never possibly know of.

“You two still have another hour and a half off. Go have a cigarette break or a vape break and I’ll see you back here in an hour if you’re bored and have nothing to do. The earlier you get to work on that report and finish your duties, the sooner you can leave. Good work today gentlemen.” Von Staufen said.

I saluted the Colonel in the exoskeleton and Karl did as well, although as a civilian he didn’t have to salute the Colonel. We went to the right side of the laboratory floors, outside of the outer perimeter of offices to dismount from our exoskeleton suits. Karl looked at me with a wide grin and said,

“That was exhilarating Heinrich. Let’s do more testing as we develop more technologies. I love this type of stuff.”

I put my hand on Karl’s shoulder and said,

“It was very fun Karl. Let’s go outside to have a cigarette and talk more about something else, I have a few things to talk to you about, in private.”

We made our way for the elevator and kept silent until we got to the outside parking lot. There, I took a box of cigarettes out of my pocket and gave Karl one. I took out a cigarette for myself and sparked up Karl’s cigarette as well as mine. These were Reichbrenner 88s, the finest cigarettes one could buy with four reichsmarks. It was ignorant of me to keep buying things I could manufacture in the laboratories myself, but that was a bit of a legal gray area. Everything we made with the nanobots and molecular assemblers had to be documented for mission-oriented purposes only and not for personal gain. Some of the scientists were bending this rule by producing things like cannabis for “testing” in the laboratory, but were really getting high off the drugs they were producing to escape the stress of the Elite-Korps.

I put the lighter to the Reichbrenner cigarette and took a deep inhale of smoke. No longer would the guilt and fear of cancer from combusting tobacco be on my mind, rejuvenative therapies would heal me through periodic infusions of gene altering chemicals and technologies, like they always had. Soon, the nanobots we created would eliminate the need for periodic rejuvenative

therapy and heal the body within minutes around the clock. As the effects of the dopamine, endorphins and adrenaline hit my bloodstream I could feel the synergy between the nicotine and TPE-49. I felt like I was in utter bliss.

“Heinrich? Are you alright Heinrich?” Von Neumann said.

I was fantasizing and daydreaming, the entire world out of focus in my sight and mind. I said to Karl,

“Yes, I was just, uhh, getting a little dizzy from the cigarette that’s all. So, what I wanted to speak to you about was the sentient prototype artificial general intelligence that is within the fourth floor anechoic chamber.. You’re still not approved to compile any AGI without having it be in that containment device. Do you understand that Karl?”

Karl took a large drag of the cigarette and ashed it. He then said,

“I knew you’d bring this up again, you remind of this all the time Heinrich. We can’t advance exponentially unless we can work on the source code outside of the anechoic chamber. These prototype AGIs are too stupid to recursively self improve at the speed we need them to improve at. And besides that, newer substrates are being fabricated all the time here at the laboratories that are much better than the prototype we created last week in the chamber.

We need to compile the source code outside of the chamber to allow us to make reflexive modifications to the intelligence. I know it seems counter-intuitive considering I am the creator of the containment device, but honestly Heinrich, it’s just too much of a roadblock in our development pipeline for a human-level sentient AGI.”

I took another drag of my cigarette, getting exponentially higher than when I first started, or at least I felt so.

“It’s ironic that you want to do that Karl, you’ve changed since I first met you. If I didn’t know any better, it would seem to me that this anechoic chamber you created was a rouse to develop the AGI with the help of the state. Not that I mind that, but still, your creation needs to be justified. There has to be a balance between optimality and safety. We can’t just recklessly let an intelligent being that lives in silico outside into the real world, with access to all of our infrastructure and technology that is connected to it. I simply can’t allow it Karl...”

Karl took another drag of the cigarette and ashed it. At this point, we were about half way through our cigarettes when Karl said,

“I agree Heinrich, it’s just that if we get to the technological singularity, the point at which this intelligence becomes smarter than all of mankind, we will be living in paradise. It will be unbelievable Heinrich, trust me. I was thinking of how we adopted your solution that you mentioned some months ago, back in April, concerning the polychronous spiking biological neural networks. The idea definitely worked to get us a pigeon level intelligence, but we need to experiment on humans Heinrich.”

I still felt uneasy about this idea of experimenting on pure Aryans. There would have to be some exception we could make, someone who we could use and to throw their life away. Someone whose life was rendered null and void, like a criminal who committed a heinous crime against civilians or the state.

I told Karl,

“I don't approve of it just yet Karl. Speak to the Colonel about it. He might approve of the idea if you grease his wheels somehow. Convince him that it's in the best interest of the state to do it as such.”

Karl flicked his finished cigarette to the ground before stepping on it, crushing the fading embers of tobacco under his black dress shoes.

“It's the only way Heinrich. We must reach the singularity or else all will be doomed.”

Doomed, hmm. I thought to myself as we made our way back into the underground chambers.

July 7th, 2055

With the hundred year anniversary of the total conquest of the planet, the SS officers and staff at the Elite-Korps laboratories were given the weekend off, including Thursday, July 7th, as well. I found myself in the biergarten in Munich, on call for official duty despite my illusory reprieve. The laboratories were closed, but I was to speak with Hitler on Friday along with Josef Mengele concerning the progress being made in the laboratories. This was an early third quarter report of our progress and on my phone, I had access to all of the data, graphs and spreadsheets which we automatically compiled showing the exponential progress we had made in just the last few months. I was impressed with the trajectory the Elite-Korps was taking and I drank from my large glass of pilsner beer to celebrate the victories we that we achieved in such a short timespan. As per usual, I had my vaporizer and cigarettes with me, along with the TPE-49 in my system.

I was becoming increasingly dependent on the nootropic effects of the TPE-49. I was so dependent that I felt utterly stupid without the drug. It synergized harmoniously with most drugs, my favorite being alcohol and nicotine. Nicotine I was addicted to quite heavily, but I reserved alcohol for special occasions. All of the people around me in the biergarten had no clue who I was, besides the fact that I was clearly an Schutzstaffel officer. They had no clue that within me, a world class nootropic put me in a league of geniuses, while ordinarily, I was only a standard deviation above in intelligence above the average person without the drug. I noticed behind my cigarette smoke wafting in the air that a man kept staring at me from a few tables down. I thought he might have been homosexual, the way he was looking and gesturing at me, winking and trying to subconsciously wave me over to him, avoiding the attention of others around him.

Eventually, I raised my glass to him, to sniff out any degeneracy amongst the population of the Reich. He saw this and came to my table. Towering over me, at almost two meters in height, he offered his hand for a handshake, saying

“Hello Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, my name is Manfred Dunst. I, I saw you here at the biergarten and wanted to speak with you about the SS. I’m thinking of joining the organization to serve the Reich.”

I shook his hand and was a bit confused by his open demeanor. I didn’t have anyone to talk to, so I welcomed his company. Something was clearly off about this man, he looked to be one of the untermensch. He had a fat and stout nose and a round double chin. He was clearly a bulky man, but obviously not a pure and chiseled Aryan.

“Sit down Manfred. You’re in good company with me. Drink some beer with me and have a cigarette if you’d like, I have some Reichbrenners if you want one.”

Manfred’s face blushed red and he smiled, ecstatic to hear of the offer for a free cigarette. He said,

“Yes, I’d like one Heinrich. You don’t mind if I call you Heinrich right or would you prefer Lieutenant Colonel Schriever?” He said while glancing between my regalia and my face. I took another sip of the beer while briefly glancing at him. I felt a bit awkward.

I took out my box of Reichbrenners and gave Manfred a cigarette along with my the butane hatch-back lighter in my pocket.

“You can call me Heinrich for now. In an official meeting or around other officers, I’d prefer if you respect my hierarchical authority above the average citizen and my other lower ranking SS officers,” I said.

I was laid back when it came to the paramilitary standards of recognition and respect. It didn’t phase me that some untermensch wanted to call me Heinrich, I saw more in common with them than the Aryan race, or at least half of me did. Half of me was still stuck in the world of the past, what could have been and what should have been. The other half, deeply entrenched in the system that society was set-up with, was that something that I couldn’t escape, something I had to live within to survive. I took a drag of my Reichbrenner and let the tobacco smoke enter my lungs. As the nicotine reached my brain, I felt deeply satisfied. Manfred took a seat in the slowly dissipating haze of the tobacco smoke.

Manfred flipped the hatch back, lit up the cigarette, took a long drag and then sat back in his chair, smiling at me.

“What’s got you so happy Manfred. You seemed to have been staring at me for quite a while from the other end of the biergarten. What’s on your mind?” I asked.

I knew for sure that Manfred was homosexual or at least I thought so. If we could purge the degenerates from society, as well as the untermensch, maybe at least one half of me would be satisfied. That would be a mission that would be more likely than my other fantasy of bringing back the past and the future it would have entailed.

Manfred took another hit of the slowly burning Reichbrenner and ashed it in the ashtray on the table with our beers. He then said,

"I know all about you Heinrich. I've been following you for *some* time."

Manfred then moved in closer to whisper to me, arching over the table but still some many centimeters away and said

"I know of the paraphernalia you have. I am the main distributor of the exotic, the material from the old world most have never had a chance to discover. I am a purveyor of the forbidden, after all of the decades of book burnings, seizures of American media and global media from the 20th century. Whoever you got it from, got it from me."

He laid back in his chair and took another drag of the cigarette. He washed down the cigarette smoke with a chug of beer, presumably, to become more intoxicated. I immediately became suspicious of Manfred, as any officer in the SS should have. I could have, knowing what I know now, pulled out my pistol in my holster and shot him dead in cold blood right there. But I was interested, I wanted to know more of how he knew that I dealt in the same forbidden material.

"How do you know Manfred? How do you know I purchased this paraphernalia? Who told you, was it Ulrich, the drug fiend I trade with? I knew I shouldn't have trusted him." I whispered to Manfred under the din of the crowd at the biergarten.

Manfred chuckled and whispered,

"Ulrich tells me plenty of things. He, like the Führer himself, loves amphetamine and methamphetamine. The Führer himself purchases exotic paraphernalia through me and my network, Heinrich. He enjoys the same things we both do, but keeps them a secret. He uhh, he doesn't like to admit it, but he's quite fond of the smut material from the United States from the early 20th century. I think it reminds him of his adolescence and the things he could have had, if he had become an artist.

Hitler craves the obscene, it's in his blood. He craves the pleasures of the flesh, like most do."

Manfred took another drag of the Reichbrenner and in his eyes I could see the reflection of the embers at the end of the cigarette, lighting up and burning the tobacco. The Reichbrenner wasn't the only thing that would burn down if Manfred didn't shut up. They, the state, might have us burnt to death for even talking about these things. That's what the SS did to traitors and conspirators, torture them, inject them with stimulants to keep them awake and burn them to death once they no longer responded to the stimulants. It was cruel, but this was Nazi Germany, the Nazi world we lived in--there was no longer the due process of law and the extra-judicial process reigned supreme.

I inhaled more smoke from my almost finished Reichbrenner cigarette. I raised my glass to Manfred, cheering to him, so as not to raise suspicion amongst the patrons of the biergarten and said

"Prost mein freund, zu einem langen leben und guter gesundheit. Für das reich."

Manfred raised his glass, clinking it with mine and said

“Cheers to you too my friend, long live the reich.”

We chit chatted for a few more minutes and left the biergarten after finishing our cigarettes and beers. Outside of the biergarten, at a park nearby, we talked more about the paraphernalia that Manfred had in his possession, on his person.

“So what do you have on you Manfred? What could I purchase today?” I asked.

Manfred reached into his trench coat and pulled out a cassette player along with a dusty book. He flashed it to me briefly and I saw that they were strapped in on the inside of his trenchcoat. While looking around suspiciously for any police or passersby, he then whispered into my ear,

“The book is *The Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. Dubois, have you heard of him?”

I was ecstatic to hear that Manfred had a work from W.E.B. Dubois that was not already in my secret collection. My internal clash between pride and prejudice left me desiring more paraphernalia that would inspire me to change and force change in the Reich. Maybe from my stature so high, I could infiltrate the party and change the course of history, maybe I thought. Maybe such aspirations were too high to aim for, in a totalitarian uber-state that I was helping turn into one that would be indestructible.

“Heinrich?” Manfred shakingly asked, perhaps wondering if I was still paying attention.

“Yes, I’m here Manfred, I’m just a little disoriented from... um, nevermind. I don’t want to talk about it. Too much nicotine and alcohol I guess. I have a problem with both drugs.” I said, trying to make sure I didn’t reveal the fact that I was on TPE-49.

Manfred unstrapped the goods, showed them to me briefly and put the book back into his trenchcoat pocket along with the cassette player. I then asked him,

“What’s in the cassette player? I hope it’s not smut porn from the 1940s, not something Hitler would enjoy. Hopefully.” I said jokingly, to lighten the mood.

Manfred got a chuckle out of the joke and whispered under his breath,

“It’s just one song. A sample of what I distribute. The song is *In a Sentimental Mood*, by Duke Ellington. Surely you’ve heard of Duke Ellington right?”

Again, my heart was racing to hear that Manfred had acquired source material paraphernalia and transcribed it to a cassette tape for me to listen to. Cassettes were easy to burn and destroy, like everything else the Reich had set to flames. I loved Duke Ellington, but this particular song was not in my collection. I said to Manfred,

“Yes, I’ve heard of Duke Ellington. Do you live around here Manfred? I would love to listen to your copy of *In a Sentimental Mood* as well as read from *The Souls of Black Folk*.”

Manfred tightened up his trenchcoat and pulled out a vaporizer from his pocket, taking a drag, then saying

“It’s a mixture of pure tetrahydrocannabinol oil and nicotine juice. You want some Heinrich? And yes, I do live in Munich. I found it convenient that you were here and convenient that you were in the SS, when I found out from Ulrich.”

He handed me the vaporizer and said

“Take a hit and I’ll let you purview the goods. Otherwise, we don’t have a deal. You need to trust me here, Heinrich. Come with me and hit the vaporizer as we walk to my apartment.”

I had no other choice. I needed his goods for my collection, even if the cassette tape was a second hand copy of the original. Perhaps if I played his little game, I would get what I wanted. I would get the original master of the song on a record and more. I grabbed the vaporizer and took a deep inhale.

I hadn’t smoked or inhaled cannabinoids in over fifteen years, since I was a kid.

“That’s it Heinrich. Inhale deeply. One hit or a million, it doesn’t matter. You’re going to get very high no matter what. Follow me. My apartment is on Wendestraße, right around the corner from this park. I’d recommend taking a few more hits, maybe uh... Three. Deep. Hits. That’ll have you nice and high for four hours or so, if you haven’t smoked or ingested cannabis in a while. When was the last time you got high Heinrich?” Manfred said, hastily walking with me through the park towards his apartment.

Manfred was pushing it. Here I was, with some guy I had no clue about, plying me with drugs, selling me highly illegal paraphernalia and I was in full blown SS regalia and uniform. I answered the question anyway, considering that I was already neck deep in metaphorical shit--Here I was, risking everything just to get a book and a cassette. I told him,

“Fifteen years. Fifteen years Manfred.” I thought to myself that if I was going to be arrested, tortured and killed now, I might as well do it while high. I took four hits in total and I could start feeling the effects of the cannabis even though it had only been a few minutes. It had been so long since I had ingested cannabis that I forgot how exactly the phenomenological experience played out--how would I feel, exactly?

I was getting extremely high as we reached Manfred’s apartment. On Wendestraße, Manfred lived at the Kontinuum Suiten, a high end condominium complex one might expect a wealthy Aryan to live at. I found it unsettling that the untermensch were gaining a grasp on society, but as always, I was torn in two. On one hand, the Reich reigned supreme, on the other hand, the world wasn’t meant to be this way. I was interested in reading *The Souls of Black Folk* and listening to *In a Sentimental Mood* while being extremely high. At this point, my mind was starting to wander as Manfred led me through the lavish condominium lobby towards the elevators.

The lobby was layered in gold leaf and had paintings from the Renaissance on the walls, presumably copies of the originals, but at that point, who knew if these were authentic or not. I wasn't too familiar with Munich and usually kept to myself. Something about Manfred made me suspicious, as if under that trench-coat, under his skin, flesh and bones and in his mind that he had some ulterior plan for my life. A strange intuition, for the time being. Here I was, with the kingpin of exotic paraphernalia distribution in all of the Reich, yet no one suspected a thing. No one had a clue it could possibly be this rich untermenschlich, walking around Munich in a trenchcoat in early July.

I was just too high for this shit.
Too high.

In the elevator, my vision started to become obscured by open eyed visuals of Hitler, in a monolithic stance with a severe grimacing face, as if to disapprove of my behavior. Perhaps my unconscious mind was wandering too far from safety, from the comfort of home and the comfort of the love of Hannah. I thought of Hannah during the long hours in the Elite-Korps laboratories and how I barely had time to be with her anymore. I missed my simple office job and my normal paramilitary obligations to the state. Something inside me desired more out of life, yet wished to pull back and retreat towards my comfort zones. I missed my childhood, I missed innocence. Innocence was gone in the Reich, we were born endowed with the sins of our fathers, an unfortunate happenstance.

"You alright Heinrich?" Manfred said with a slight inflection and intonation, connoting annoyance.

"You don't seem too happy. Cheer up my friend, all is well here. You are safe with me Heinrich.

Remember that, we are on the same side here. I would call you a friend, but I am more of an obsessed stalker than anything. I apologise for my behavior Heinrich, but I needed to know that I could trust you myself. Ulrich isn't that good at reflecting the inner sentiments of my proxy customers," Manfred said.

Ulrich, although mentioned at the biergarten, was the furthest person from my mind. The ominous overwatch of Hitler pervaded into my mind at the deepest levels of my unconscious, as if bound to the flesh within my skull itself. I was scared and afraid still, despite Manfred's attempt to reassure me.

"We're here Heinrich, the twenty second floor. My condominium is number fourteen. As you can tell so far, there's not that many condos per floor. This is quite the exclusive complex in Munich and I'd say all of Greater Germany," Manfred said.

Manfred was sweating from the intense heat of his overcoat and the weather outside. The refreshing central air conditioning alleviated some of my anxiety and gave me the temporary illusion of safety as I entered the abode of another person who was just like half of me. Caught in-between the pursuit of justice, restoration and the totality of the state, Manfred was that other half of me. I was conflicted and willing to pursue change.

He shuffled around his right trench coat pocket for his condo keys and put the keys into the locks above the door knob. Four locks guarded the heavy steel door from a break in. I meticulously watched him, blitzed out of my mind on the tetrahydrocannabinol oil. He engaged the retina scanner above the locks and the door unlocked. He then said,

“Mach dich wie zu hause, kamerad”

“Vielen dank, Manfred.” I said, nervously.

As I entered the condominium, the first thing that hit me was the sight of the walls. The walls were entirely padded with anechoic-acoustic absorption material, so as to—in my subjective perspective—hide his activities in the condominium. The windows were completely covered in the material, with sliding bars to pull back the padding when I presume he wanted to let in some fresh air during the spring or fall. Besides that, the apartment, unlike the rest of the condominium complex was spartan in nature and minimalistic.

“Why do you have so much acoustic padding, Manfred?” I asked him.

Manfred pointed to a metal box in the corner of his room, with a large metal handle on the front facing side of the box and he then said,

“Inside that box is my record player which I use to sample and listen to old records from the 1900s up until the conquering of the world by Germany. I transcribe the information from the records onto cassettes for my clients, as you very well know, so they can be easily listened to and destroyed if the authorities come looking for the paraphernalia. Inside each cassette, I have installed fail-safe electronic chips which wipe the contents of the cassette and self destruct the chip in such a way to make it seem as if the cassette was damaged in an ordinary fashion, like as if it were mishandled properly. It’s a little complicated to explain, I’d rather you enjoy the samples I provided for you today and make yourself comfortable, Heinrich. I’ll make us some drinks, what would you like?”

Great, I thought. Manfred is plying me with more drugs. Fuck it. I decided to drink.

“Just give me another beer. pilsner if you have it. Otherwise, I’ll take whatever you’ve got Manfred.”

I made my way for the couch against the back left wall, where the protruding anechoic acoustic material pushed the couch away from the wall. I sat down and began to relax. The ominous image of Hitler was gone from my mind and the visual phosphenes along with the vignetting of my vision subsided. Now, everything in my field of vision was becoming quite wavy and flowing like as if in a painting by Van Gogh, an approved artist of the Reich. The square interlocking anechoic absorption material was bending, cresting and falling as if they were like waves in the ocean. I felt better now and I started to enjoy the intensity of the cannabinoid oil. I laid back with my hands behind my head and thought how good being on cannabis felt.

Manfred brought me my beer and pulled a large lazy chair from the otherside of the living room to sit across from me. He handed me *The Souls of Black Folk* and then said,

"I'll play the original of *In a Sentimental Mood* for you on the record player, let me open up the box and get the record player setup."

For someone who was of Manfred's stature, he seemed rather docile and kind. While I was initially scared of him, I grew to appreciate his company, even though I had only known him for such a short time. Inside me, I felt a feeling of contentedness and warmth, something I hardly felt anymore. I looked at the book in my hands and saw that it had a patina of dust on it. I wiped off the patina to see the cover of the book and read it to myself in my mind.

*"THE
SOULS OF BLACK FOLK
ESSAYS AND SKETCHES*

W.E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS

SECOND EDITION

*CHICAGO
A.C. McCLURG & CO.
1903"*

Below the text that said second edition, was the logo of the publisher. I looked at the table of contents and decided on an essay I think would be interesting to read in the brief time that I had with Manfred, before I had to return to the Hotel Shicksal, in downtown Munich. Still present on my mind was my meeting with Hitler on Friday and what exactly I would say to him and Mengele about the progress we were making in the Elite-Korps laboratories. Forget about that, I thought. That's not important for tonight, let's just enjoy the moment, the sheer rebellion against the state, the freedom that the forbidden gave me.

I read the table of contents and selected the essay "Of The Coming of John" on page two hundred and twenty eight. I was a quick reader and while Manfred was still fiddling with his record player, I got to a section of the book which captured my emotional struggle that split me in two. The essay, a fictional story of two Johns, one black and one white in juxtaposition with one another, captured my attention. The passage read

"Thus in the far-away Southern village the world lay waiting, half consciously, the coming of two young men, and dreamed in an inarticulate way of new things that would be done and new thoughts that all would think. And yet it was singular that few thought of two Johns,—for the black folk thought of one John, and he was black; and the white folk thought of another John, and he was white. And neither world thought of the world's other save with a vague unrest."

By the time I had read up to this passage, Manfred had finished setting up the record player. He then looked at the page I was on, being so far ahead in the book, on the penultimate chapter.

He smirked and said to me sarcastically,

“You almost finished the book. I just gave it to you! Put the book down Heinrich, we’ll talk about it in a second. Here take this sheet of paper and use it as a bookmark.”

Manfred reached into his black corduroy pants pocket and tore a piece of blank journal paper for me to use as a bookmark. I folded it and left it on page two hundred and thirty two. Manfred then walked over to the record player and laid down the record stylus. A scratching noise preceded the song. I sat back on the couch in a guarded position, with the book against my chest as I listened to the song, with my eyes closed.

“That’s it Heinrich. Take it all in, let the music enrapture your infidelity to the Reich.” Manfred said, with a deep, exasperated voice.

The drugs were intoxicating me beyond control and I was feeling as if I was losing my grip on consciousness, suddenly, all had faded to black. Manfred had drugged me.

July 8th, 2055 6:41 AM

I woke up the next morning in the park around the corner from Manfred’s house on a street bench, with the book and cassette in my SS uniform pockets. The meeting with Hitler and Mengele was within three hours in Munich, at the Führerbau near the Konigzplatz. I woke up, not remembering that I was in the Hirschgarten, some four kilometers away from the Führerbau. My hair was an absolute mess and my uniform in disarray. I didn’t what excuse to make for the Führer, but I decided to lie. My excuse was going to be infidelity against my wife and a tumultuous night of rough sex. In reality, I was probably the one who was violated and raped by Manfred Dunst.

I headed for the nearest general store, a quarter kilometer away from the park bench I was sleeping on and bought myself a comb for half a Reichsmark and received the change in five Reichspfennig. I looked in the mirror at the general store and combed my hair in the usual side part it had, on the left side, to look as professional as possible. It would be impossible to get my clothes ironed in time so I asked the madam behind the counter if she had a steaming machine to press my clothes, and she did. In the comfort of the store’s back stockroom, I undressed and steamed my clothes to remove the wrinkles from the attire, careful not to ruin the regalia embroidered and pinned to the uniform.

Back in the main lobby of the store, I eyed the sales clerk and visually enjoyed her luscious curves and beautiful face. She was clearly part of the untermensch, but she would serve as a good decoy for my plans. I asked for her name and she said,

“Maria, Maria Hernandez.” Clearly, her and her family still made a living doing menial things and menial work. Some of the untermensch, like Manfred, managed to rise above their societal chains and break free from indentured poverty that the state artificially placed on them. It was no different in the previous centuries with capitalism, but instead of the state placing artificial barriers of entry into the upper classes, it was the industrial elite. We traded one set of chains for another, each digging deeper into our flesh with the tug and pull of the slaves of the world. I was glad I had made the choice to join the SS and to infiltrate the ranks of the state, perhaps

hoping to become rich and powerful one day, to free myself from those chains despite my engineered birth.

I asked her for a piece of paper and wrote down this sultry message,

“My darling, won’t you come with me back to my hotel to make love? The juiciness of your lips, the appeal of your face and your tight body has my cock raging hard. I would love to pin you down against my hotel mattress to hear your moans, to feel your pleasure.. To make love.”

I handed her the piece of paper and as she read it, she licked her lips and looked around to the other customers in the store. She was clearly influenced by many things, namely being my position in the SS, my aesthetic appeal and my position in society as a true blooded Aryan. She wrote down her phone number and gave me a kiss on the cheek, then whispering into my ear

“Yes Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, come back here at 6 pm when my shift is over and take me to your apartment. Make love to me. Ravish me.”

I left the store, looking back at her, tempted with her seductive acceptance of my decoy for Hitler. I was going to do it, I was going to ravish her after I saw Hitler. I pulled out my smartphone and searched on a map application for the shortest walking route to the Führerbau. It would take fifty minutes to get there and I had already spent some thirty minutes within the store. My head was pulsating from the drugs I had taken the night before and I felt sore all over my body. I thought to myself that a good vigorous walk would expel the pain and discontent from my body and mind. I walked down Wendl-Dietrich-Straße onto the adjacent Nymphenburger Straße. Along the way, I was sweating profusely and my attire underwear was soaked in sweat. Along the streets, I looked at the passersby of the proletariat, living their lives unassumingly, without a care in the world. The weekend was here and it was a four day weekend, I assumed they would all go out drinking and have vigorous sex, like I planned with Maria tonight, despite my marriage to my wife.

On Nymphenburger Straße , I stopped by a local coffee shop to get an artificially sweet coffee and read up on the day’s news to distract me before meeting with Hitler and Mengele. I loaded up my large coffee with artificial sweeteners and whole milk. I sipped on my coffee and enjoyed the central air conditioning of the coffee shop, looking about the patrons before taking out my phone to read the day’s news.

I opened up the webpage on my browser to Reich Zentral and was greeted by the following headlines

“ MAN KILLS WIFE OVER PORTRAIT OF HITLER
NEW SCHOOL FINISHES CONSTRUCTION IN MUNICH
THE NATIONAL HOLIDAY SPARKS A CONSUMER FRENZY..”

I read the day’s news and spoke to Maria over the phone about the sultry sex we were going to have that night and how I wished to ravish her body. Under the coffee table, my cock was as hard as could be. In my mind I thought of her Iberian beauty, a reminiscence of my paraphernalia and the world of diversity that existed before the Reich took control of everything. I wondered if I still would have fucked her even if she was a mixed Spanish girl and thinking

back upon it now, I would have. By the time 9 AM rolled around, I made my way for the Führerbau to speak with Hitler and Mengele. Outside of the Führerbau, above the ledge over three ominous black doors, the Reichsadler appeared in all of its mighty glory. Updated from when Paul Ludwig Troost first designed the building, the eagle's wings spread for quite some distance as a symbol of the reach and power of the state. At the front doors, three Nazi Wehrmacht soldiers on duty greeted me and asked for my papers. I reached into my uniform pocket and gave them my papers.

"Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, you are cleared for entry. You are here early, so walk around the building for a little bit to kill some time. I presume you have never been to Munich before? Or the Führerbau?"

I glanced at the soldier after taking back my papers and said,

"No, never. I've heard of the Führerbau in history books. This was the place where in 1938, Hitler signed the Munich Agreement with Neville Chamberlain and Germany proceeded to occupy the Sudetenland in the following years."

The soldier took off his helmet and stroked his hair, saying

"Ah, a man of history are you? You've got quite the memory Lieutenant Colonel Schriever. The Führerbau has become more of an administrative building since then, but the Führer comes here from time to time on official business to speak with the administrators here as well as top party officials. Like I said, you're clear to come in."

The soldier saluted me and I saluted back. I entered the central tall black doors into the main lobby of the Führerbau and was pleased at the sight of the marbled floor and columns. The building was simple compared to the Reich Chancellery, although the Chancellery was in a simple style as well. Devoid of any excess flourishes, the building reminded me of the early 20th century and the rise of the Nazi party. The Nazis evoked the imagery of Rome with marbled colonnades and through their rhetoric, the dream of the thousand year Reich was slowly becoming a reality. In the middle of the lobby, Hitler and Mengele were waiting surrounded by Hitler's bodyguards and assistants, with Hitler looking displeased to see me.

I walked up to Hitler, saluted him and said

"Heil der Führer! Heil Hitler!"

Hitler saluted back, with a smug look of disappointment on his face. He then said,

"Heinrich. We received reports that you were drunk and disorderly last night. You fell asleep in the Hirschgarten. We left you there, hoping you would come to your senses realizing that what you had done was extremely disrespectful and insulting to the SS. Before you say anything, I forgive you. I understand how tough the work at the Elite-Korps is, but if you do that again, you'll be dead Lieutenant Colonel Schriever!"

I took Hitler's words seriously and he instilled a sense of fear in me. His bodyguards and Mengele looked at me with deadset expressions, recognizing the legitimacy of the Führer and the meaning behind his words. When he said I would be dead, it was true. I was not above the law and I was not above the Führer.

"I'm sorry mein Führer, it will never happen again." I said as I tried holding back tears. I didn't mean it and I'm sure Hitler knew of the paraphernalia I had in my inner uniform pockets. If his bodyguards inspected me now, I would certainly be tortured and summarily executed.

"Come with us Lieutenant Colonel Schriever. You're early and I like that, but you're here too early. As requested last week, we were to meet at 9:40 AM, not 9. But still, you're here and we can get to discussion right away. Dr.Mengele, this is Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, this is Dr. Josef Mengele."

I had never met Josef Mengele before, I had always assumed he was busy in his laboratories working on human experiments sanctioned by the Reich. I had an immense fear of the man, he was known as the Butcher of The Reich, The Angel of Death, his unofficial titles f behind the scenes. I shook the man's hands and looked into his eyes. He looked eager, from what I thought, to butcher me as well. Hitler led us up the stairs towards an adjacent hallway on the left side. After walking through that hallway, we were lead to a higher level portico covered walkway in the building and walked into a simple conference room. In the conference room, more security and bodyguards were posted at regular intervals along the edges of the room.

"Sit anywhere you like, except the opposite ends of the rectangular table. Dr.Mengele and I would like to have the opposite ends of the table." Hitler said.

I took a seat in the middle, one of the only seats not occupied by the administrators already at the conference room table.

"I the rest of you out! Now! This meeting is for the Lieutenant Colonel, Dr.Mengele's and their eyes and ears only. Out!" Hitler exasperated.

Quickly, the administrators walked out to the outside portico covered hallway and awaited further instructions from the security. As Hitler and Dr.Mengele sat down at the opposite ends of the table, I felt like I was miles apart from both of them. I felt as if in this moment, a bullet would be put in my head by the overwhelming manpower in the room. I was more than nervous at this moment.

"I want to get straight to business Heinrich. Tell me what has been happening at the Elite-Korps laboratories. I've already spoken to Colonel Von Staufen as of 8:30 this morning, but I'd like a second report and opinion. Do you have your documentation with you? Or some form of a presentation?" Hitler asked.

I pulled out a thumb drive from my inner uniform pocket and said

"Only a presentation mein Führer."

"Good. *Very good*. Well, use the computer across from Dr.Mengele and get on with it. Let's see what information you have." Hitler said, with an air of contentedness, sighing leisurely. Dr.Mengele turned around and looked at the projector, screen and podium in the presentation room.

I walked over to the computer and inserted the one hundred terabyte thumbdrive into its respective port. I browsed the contents of the drive for the presentation and started with the latest statistics from the laboratories.

“I have a four slide length presentation, as I’d like to be brief about what we’ve done and talk more about the progress instead of boring you with a lengthy presentation.” I said.

“Good Lieutenant Colonel Schriever, I like that. Getting straight to the point, that’s how my men should behave. Continue.” Hitler said

The first slide was titled

“Exponential Gains”

It featured a scatter graph with a smooth line of the number of devices we had created since April, in a month by month breakdown. The first month there was 1 device manufactured. By the fourth month, one thousand five hundred and fifty devices, machines, experimental methods and prototypes had been created in aggregate. The next slide was a full list with drop down menus for each respective section of the things mentioned on the previous chart, the third slide was the prototype artificial general intelligence and some statistics about the strides forward in the laboratories made with the device and the final slide was a single question,

“How do we get to the technological singularity without human experimentation?”

After I finished my presentation about the report, Hitler seemed dissatisfied, sighing and frowning his brow. He then said,

“You mean to fucking tell me you haven’t gotten an artificial superintelligence yet? What is this Heinrich? What is this fucking nonsense?” Hitler said as he slammed his fists against the table.

I fought back when I shouldn’t have and damned myself in the process.

“Mein Führer, we are trying but the problem is that we have no means of finding the mechanism behind the actual subjective control of human consciousness. Colonel Von Staufen has limited us from testing on Aryans and Untermensch...”

Hitler interrupted me by saying,

“WHAT IS THIS INSOLENT HEINRICH? END THIS PRESENTATION IMMEDIATELY! You better listen the fuck up Heinrich, I don’t give a shit about your position in the SS or anything else...”

At this moment, I started to become dizzy, feeling like I was on the precipice of fainting and barely staying awake. The Führer wanted my head and in this moment, my life would probably end.

“... On Monday, You, I and Dr.Mengele are going straight to the Elite-Korps laboratories and it'll be off with Colonel Von Staufen's head. You will be the new operating officer at the Elite-Korps laboratories. Assistant Eva, come here!” Adolf mercilessly screamed as the veins bulged from his forehead. Eva, one of his assistants standing by the table, ran over to Hitler as he whispered something in her ear. Looking in her eyes, I could see the trepidation and fear coming over her. She nodded her head and ran out of the room.

“Go back to your hotel Heinrich, I will see you promptly at 6:00 AM ON THE DOT outside of the Hotel Schicksal. Make sure your service pistol is cleaned and in working order. You're going to need it, just incase anything happens.”

July 9th, 2055 5:00 AM

The next morning, I woke up to shave, have breakfast and use the restroom. I ironed my clothes and waited in the lobby for the Führer to arrive. When 6 AM came, Hitler did as well, in a tenvehicle convoy. Eight heavily armored Spezialwaffen und Taktik-Trucks came into the cul-de-sac entrance of the Hotel, with the Führer's heavily armored limousine in the middle of the convoy. Two of the convoy truck soldiers exited their trucks as the Führer exited his limousine with his truck as well.

The Führer saluted me and I saluted back.

“Heil der Führer!” I exasperated in the formal Nazi salute stance.

“Come with me Heinrich, come into the limousine. We're going to take care of Colonel Von Staufen”

I obliged with the Führer's commands and sat in the back next to the Führer and Josef Mengele Mengele was rather quiet, which was what I had heard about the man. All along the ride, Hitler, I and Mengele made small talk. Once we were outside of the gates of perimeter of the Elite Korps in The Black Forest, at 9 AM, the soldiers at the gate let us in. The SWAT teams exited their trucks along with Hitler, Mengele and myself. Guns drawn, we raided the first floor laboratories where Von Staufen usually resided and held him up at gunpoint.

“What is this madness? Am I being tried for a crime?! Heinrich, what's going on?” Von Staufen said confusingly.

With ninety six guns drawn at Josef Von Staufen's face, he had no choice but to surrender.

“We're putting you in The Machine of Flesh, Von Staufen.” Josef Mengele said quietly, but assuredly.

“Men, take hold of Von Staufen and bring him towards the access ramps! We're going down to the sixth floor of the laboratories!” Josef Mengele said.

The closest members of Hitler's bodyguard that were in the limousine and the SWAT trucks took a hold of Von Staufen and dragged him by his hands with the SWAT team members secured the

laboratories, guns drawn and ready to kill. While we were walking down to the previously unknown--at least to me--sixth floor laboratories, Von Staufen was heard screaming

"No, please, not The Machine of Flesh. What have I done! Heinrich, speak well of me, convince them to save me! You know I've done nothing wrong!" Von Staufen said, with a stream of tears running down his face.

I pitied for the man, but knew if I spoke up, I would be in the same situation he was in. I never heard of this machine, The Machine of Flesh. I assumed it was some type of torture device hidden away in the lower levels of the laboratories.

Once we reached the sixth floor access ramp, a large vaulted steel door and the smell of fetor were the first things I noticed. The hallway to the door, dimly lit, reminded me of the Reich Chancellery with its winding, long shadows and dark corridors. Hitler entered an access code and scanned his eye in the retinal scanner in the center of the door and the large vaulted door opened. The entire room was empty, except for a chair in the middle, resembling an electric chair, used to execute prisoners. As Von Staufen was dragged to the chair, the lights in the large room with tall ceilings began to turn on. From the top perimeter sides of the room, I could see blurred windows which I assumed were one way windows, in which scientists were watching with clipboards and tablets in their hands.

Von Staufen was forced into the chair and strapped down. He struggled against the force of the strong Aryans holding him down and Mengele came up to him and said,

"I'm going to remove your scalp Colonel Von Staufen. You know what will come next."

Von Staufen screamed in horror and said,

"You don't need to remove my scalp to use the machine, why are you doing this to me? Heinrich, Hitler, help me!"

Mengele pulled out a syringe and a dull rusty knife, then injecting Josef Von Staufen with a myriad of unknown chemicals. Von Staufen's agitation ceased and he entered a state of calm resolve. Mengele walked behind Von Staufen and grabbed him by his forehead, beginning to separate the scalp from the skull with the dull, rusty serrated knife.

"Uuurrghghhh.. AHH!!!" Von Staufen gurgled as foam came out of his mouth, trying to stay conscious.

Once the scalp was removed and the screams had ended, Mengele then said quickly, rattling off words in a strict tone.

"We're going to inject you with methamphetamine to keep you awake Josef. Remain calm."

Mengele pulled out another syringe with a thick gauge, so as to cross-sectionally saturate his blood with more methamphetamine quicker. Von Staufen, within seconds, began to act skittish and agitated once again, with foam running down his mouth. His scalp began to regenerate

from what I presumed were nanobots in the injections, but as they did, Mengele cut more and more of the scalp off. Finally, hanging by two straps on the back of the wooden chair, Mengele put a cap with what seemed to be electrodes on Von Staufen's head. I assumed they were implanted on the polychronous hierarchical neurons which would trigger a cascade of action potentials to be spiked, redistributed towards complete conscious control of the end user of The Machine of Flesh.

"He's in. You can leave Colonel Schriever, we'll take this from here. I relieve everyone of their duties as of today, we will handle the former Colonel. If you don't do the right thing Colonel Schriever, you could end up here as well."

In the final hours of Josef Von Staufen's life, he became one with the Realm of Flesh, the final destination for all souls, be they virtuous or damned.

Chapter Four: The Machine of Flesh

July 13th, 2055

When I returned to the Elite-Korps tuesday morning, I was greeted by Heinrich Himmler and Brigadier General Reinhard Klausowitz, who were having a meeting with the chain of command of the SS and the scientists of the Elite-Korps. I saluted Himmler and Klausowitz, Himmler sternly reprimanded me for my on time arrival, by saying

“Colonel Schriever, I once had a teacher who told me if you are early, you are on time. If you are on time, you are late. If you are late, you’re late. I want you reporting for duty a half hour earlier, you are no different than your subordinates here at the Elite-Korps.”

I shrugged it off and said,

“Yes ReichsFührer Himmler, I am sorry for my insolence.”

Himmler quickly snapped back at me and said,

“Sorry isn't good enough Colonel Schriever, I want to see results! I want to see action out of you. But that's enough for now, let us fill you in on what's happening. The former Colonel, Colonel Von Staufen is still alive in The Machine of Flesh. We have found a way to emulate a human level Artificial General Intelligence by using the polychronous hierarchical neurons in the brain, as you suggested in your doctoral thesis and the laboratories.

Karl Von Neumann along with the computer engineering teams have been hard at work updating their protosentient algorithms as well as fabricating a new substrate using the protosentient AI's computational capacity to develop itself. We expect to reach the technological singularity within weeks, for as long as we can have test subjects in The Machine of Flesh, that is.

I also thought I might fill you in on the secrets we've been keeping from you Colonel Schriever. The Machine of Flesh is simply a chair that binds you to the Realm of Flesh, a newly discovered ulterior reality to our own. We have yet to know what is within the Realm of Flesh, but our brain scanning technologies and nanoscopic electrodes have allowed us to probe deeper into the problem of what exactly it is.

Colonel Von Staufen was the first to enter The Machine of Flesh, AND YOU'RE NEXT!” Himmler exasperated, while pointing his finger at me.

Suddenly, my heart dropped and began racing.

Seeing what happened to Josef Von Staufen, I assumed the same would happen to me. I would rather it have been someone else, as we all would have. Better to have been someone else than myself and in this moment I prayed to Gott that my sins would be absolved, that he would see the goodness of my deeds and see that they outweighed my sins.

Himmler began laughing, put my hand on my right shoulder and said

“I'm just kidding Colonel Schriever. You're not going to be put into The Machine of Flesh, well, not yet. You do have some explaining to do.”

Himmler then reached into his inner uniform pocket and pulled out a folded piece of paper. He unfolded the paper and gave it to me. On the paper was an x-ray scan of my person and the contents on my person. God damnit. I had forgotten about the dual x-ray absorptiometry scanners at the entrance to the laboratories on Friday. I couldn't hide the paraphernalia, nor lose it, knowing how valuable it was sentimentally to me.

On the copied x-ray scan, one could clearly see the book and cassette player in the pockets of my uniform, bones, muscles, fat and outline of my flesh. I was at a loss for words in how to explain how that I had a book on me, along with a cassette.

“We examined the book's title, contents, and determined which book it was. *The Souls of Black Folk* was the book, and the cassette was *In A Sentimental Mood* by Duke Ellington. Can you explain this paraphernalia Heinrich? Be honest with us, we might make your punishment for insubordination a little less painful, before your untimely death.” Heinrich Himmler said, unwaveringly.

As I looked Himmler in the eyes and at the SS officers around me in my peripheral vision, I responded reflexively and instantaneously.

“I was trying to sniff out members of the Resistance. There's a secret plan amongst some dissidents, Aryans and Untermensch alike. They have a highly complex black market network which I am trying to infiltrate.”

Himmler squared me up with his eyes and inspected me from head to toe. His face grimaced slightly and eyebrows twitched as well.

“Are you sure Heinrich? While you were on your way to work this morning, we raided your house and found much more paraphernalia hidden in your attic. Bring out Hannah!” Reichsführer Himmler exclaimed.

From the top right quadrant of the SS officer quarters, a group of SS officers armed with machine guns carried my wife out, dragging her by the knees, her knees scraping against the floor leaving a trail of fresh blood. They propped her up in front of me and it seemed like she was already interrogated and was badly bruised in the face. Somehow, they got here, raided my

house, interrogated Hannah and ruffled her up before I could even get to work. Hannah had said she was going to be out with friends on Monday night, so I assumed they must have interrogated her the night before, and that's why she never came home last night.

Hannah began crying and Himmler spoke again,

"Hannah told us everything Heinrich. Tell us, tell us the truth of why you have all that forbidden material. It's no good Heinrich that you've done this. There were piles of books, records, magazines, films, a bunch of blasphemous works from yesteryear. You know such things are no good for you Heinrich. Is this answer, the answer that you were sniffing out the Resistance your final answer?"

I looked Reichsführer Himmler squarely in his left eye and said

"Yes Reichsführer Himmler. It's true. I was sniffing out the Resistance."

Himmler then proceeded to wave away the SS officers holding Hannah and said,

"Rejuvenate her. She's innocent as well as Colonel Schriever. Everyone who interrogated her and received false answers from torture will be subjected to the same punishment."

Heinrich Himmler looked back at me and said,

"Good work Colonel. It's true. There is a Resistance force in the Reich. All you speak of, is the truth. They are subverting the authority of the state by hiding their tracks. They are amongst our ranks, here in The Elite-Korps and in the Schuzstaffel. Come with me Colonel, we are headed with the rest of the officers to the sixth floor, where The Machine of Flesh is."

I was surprised my attempt to hide the truth worked. I felt relieved, but now was under immense pressure to not subvert the activities of the state. Still, I would find some way to disobey, to return to the world of freedom and prosperity that existed before this hellish totalitarian uberstate.

At the sixth floor laboratories, the SS officers and a group of scientists crowded around the half alive, half dead corpse of a man that was the former Colonel Josef Von Staufen. Still plugged into The Machine of Flesh, Himmler explained to me

"He's been unconscious for quite some time as we observed his brain state. From the neuronal imaging we are observing his physical mind, he seems to be in a place that is transient and ulterior to this reality. It has been codenamed The Realm of Flesh, hence the name of the machine, The Machine of Flesh. It is hard to resolve the exact images of what this realm consists of Heinrich, but it seems to be an otherworldly place of flesh, muscle, sinew, blood and bone.

Our scientists have hypothesized that this could be the before and after life, a place of death, incarnation and reincarnation. The physical souls of the lost, damned, forsakened, the good, the blessed, no matter what kind of life they lived, they are all here. Your ancestors, your mother,

your father and our lineage, our bloodlines can all be traced back to this place, our scientists hypothesize.”

As Himmler spoke, all I could see in Von Staufen was a frothing man who was once a loyal and obedient servant to the state suffering in his final days, if not hours, strapped to a wooden chair with electrodes on his exposed brain. It was clear that Mengele had his hands in all of this, The Angel of Death had earned his reputation for doing such things. I once again, like I did from time to time, started phasing out of my own consciousness, in a state of dizziness and sickness.

“Heinrich! Heinrich, are you listening!?!” Himmler yelled while pulling me by my uniform collar around my torso.

“Yes ReichsFührer, I am. It's just that the TPE-49 and the stimulants have a tendency to make me rather dizzy and feel ill sometimes. I apologise,” I said.

“That's alright Colonel Schriever. At least you're taking them, as you are supposed to. Anyway, like I was saying, I want to put YOU into The Machine of Flesh. The former Colonel Von Staufen has exhausted his usefulness and is close to death. We've already examined the neuronal circuitry and neurotransmission of the brain and are developing what we need from his sacrifice. Your mission is to infiltrate the Realm of Flesh and to tell us what you see. Soldiers! Restrain him!”

I had no choice but to comply. The Schutzstaffel soldiers grabbed me and bound me within the chair after taking out Colonel Von Staufen from the chair.

“And for him, Von Staufen, I will kill him. He's of no use anymore. He's basically dead.” Heinrich Himmler said, cold and without remorse.

Himmler unholstered his pistol on his side and pointed it at the still frothing Colonel Von Staufen, exposed brain and all. He pulled the trigger and pulled the trigger until he fully expended the magazine, unloading all of his inner rage and frustration against Von Staufen.

“Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow!”

The chamber of the pistol slid back as the magazine was fully expended and Himmler loaded another magazine into the pistol, cocking it back to chamber in a round and he then said

“Take the corpse and feed it to the dogs. They deserve it.”

“Yes ReichsFührer Himmler,” the closest soldiers to the corpse said to Himmler.

They dragged his body out and his brains and neck muscles were completely torn apart and eviscerated. As they did this, the former Colonel left a trail of blood on the floor, something Himmler looked at intensely while they dragged out the corpse.

“Now you, Colonel Schriever, you’ve got an important mission for us. Let me show you what I’m talking about.” Himmler said as he walked towards me, holstering his pistol back on his side. He walked behind me and placed the cap on my head. That’s when everything faded to black.

Sometime later, I awoke. My vision blurry, I looked towards my body to see that my clothes were gone. All that remained was the muscle, sinew, and flesh under my skin. I heard an intense howling and the echoes of a weeping woman. I rubbed my eyes and saw the Realm of Flesh as it really was. A putrid horror of death, feter and decay. Shambling corpses were walking around, like if they were ghosts in the Christian purgatory, cursed to walk the Earth in neither damnation or heavenly bliss. I walked through the corpses before an epiphany struck me--this place, this otherworldly Realm of Flesh-- was as real as the world I came from.

After walking through the fog which entrenched the corpses, I came upon an ironic sight. These corpses, somehow in their suffering, were procreating in massive orgies, while letting out simultaneous moans of displeasure and pleasure. These were the ties that bind, sex, flesh and death. Perhaps this was the world we came from and went to, when we were waiting in a queue to reincarnate into this planet. In this moment, all of time seemed to collapse on a single point into the eternal, the unfortunate consequence of the human condition in this otherworldly realm. What I could not figure out, were the ontological questions. Why exactly were we human? Why were we bound to this Realm of Flesh and how did it come into being?

I was never much of a philosopher, but as an outsider looking in, my mind began to wonder in the outside world and the Realm of Flesh, wherever this place was. The carnality of flesh and the ties that bind us to being, were one in the same in this place. I wondered to myself, if I should have joined the people in their procreation, as I would have done on Earth. As I did with Hannah, as I did with Maria, against the good will of my marriage. I tried to shed tears, but none would come to me in this place. It was like, I being a train conductor on a railroad, had no junction in which I could turn. It felt as if I was moving along this journey, through this place, as if in a heavenly near death experience, without control of where I was going.

I was tempted to join the festivities and to appease my inner instinct to have sex. I needed it, more than anything in life, it drove me unconsciously in what I knew as the real world and this place as well. As I moved closer to the orgy, the further away it moved from me, with each step proportionally increasing the distance. The faster I ran towards it, the further it moved, yet still, it felt like I was just running in place, chasing some dream of satisfying the animal cravings inside of me.

Flesh, blood, bone and sinew. The sight of these things disgusted me, but the beings here made the most of their experience in the realm. It was as if Hieronymus Bosch had painted into being his fantastical worlds, like in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, except without much delight and no garden. The Boschian landscape was eery to me and frightening. I know only of these words and these analogies because words could not describe them in any other way. Yet still, it was something, like the Nazis expected, to be experienced for yourself. Walking about these stumbling corpses of flesh were animals, small and large, or at least what I thought were animals. Some had long snouts, large eyes, small eyes, but they all had the same constant feature, a lack of skin and visible organs and flesh. This world was a place like none other, I believe one seen by the prophets of yesteryear, the primordial hell in which the forsaken would be damned to eternity for denying the one true savior, Christ.

I thought little of Christ in my youth, the Roman Catholic church, not being what it used to be, was the only state sanctioned religion left. Adolf Hitler had abandoned his chase of the occult and demonology, the accursed belief system of the Nazis that Himmler himself secretly was still devoutly inspired by. There I stood in this Garden of Hellish Fiends, I thought to myself, wondering where the Christ was. Was the Christ here? Were we all damned to this hellish world for the things we had done? I began sobbing heavily when a hand was placed on my shoulder, and when I looked, no one was there. In my mind, I heard the words of Christ resonate, in ancient Aramaic, when halfway between the sentences, I heard the words in German.

“Listen my son, you and your people have all been damned to this place, for denying me, your savior. You have come at the most opportune time, you still have your corporeal body on the outside world. You can still become a part of my kingdom, as it is in Heaven, and as it shall be on Earth...”

I looked behind myself, and there was the Christ, in his flesh, without skin, damned to the same place we were as well. It was all lies and I ran further away from the ungodly sight of who was supposed to be the savior of man. Running through this hellish place, tears running down my corpse, I felt no safety, no compassion, no warmth. The souls of the dead, those stuck in eternal purgatory reached out towards me, knowing I was different. They knew I was the man outside looking in, that I was not truly dead or waiting to reincarnate. The further I ran from the consummation of the flesh, the massive orgy, the louder the sounds of the sex and the stronger the temptation of the flesh became. A voice in my mind asked me

“Do you accept the consummation, or do you decline, Heinrich?”

“I decline! I decline! Get me away from this place!” I screamed out in agony, dying to leave this place.

After declining to join the consummation of the flesh via sex, I came upon two familiar people, but only because in my mind could I hear their voices. It was my mother and my father, Sofia and Ernest, weeping in torment at what they saw, their own son in the same place.

“Heinrich, you are not meant to be here. It was too soon for you Heinrich,” my mother said.

“We love you Heinrich. Leave this place, it is not where you belong, not as of yet. We must all come to this place and suffer in miserable happiness, such is the twisting dichotomy of this place. We have been here, since we died, waiting, waiting to return back home to be with you and Hannah.” My father said, telepathically.

I reached out towards my parents, finally, with some semblance of control over my being and I awoke, gasping for air in the sixth floor laboratories. Himmler with his arms crossed, then asked me,

“And what did you see Heinrich? Is this place, The Realm of Flesh, the same thing we’ve been detecting with our brain scans?”

I was still in shock, tied down and restrained against my will. The nanoscopic electrodes that had punctured my skull were removed and I started to regain control of my autonomic functioning like breathing. My eyes darted across the room, looking at the scientists who were staring at me, the SS commanders, the SS soldiers as well as Himmler. From the foggy windows towards the ceiling of the sixth floor, I could faintly discern more scientists observing me.

“Water. I need water. Please, give me some water.” I asked Himmler, desperately so.

“Get him some water soldiers! He’s delirious, inject him with sedatives, he’s no good to us like this!” instructed Himmler to his soldiers, authoritatively.

My heart, beating at a kilometer per minute, figuratively speaking, put me into a state of shock and I fainted from the experience. Some time later, I awoke, unrestrained in the upper level seventh floor triage rooms of the Elite Korps. Sitting across from my bed, was Himmler with his fingers interwoven and his head down, monitoring my condition on the holographic vitals screens near my bed.

I opened my eyes, seeing Himmler across from me under a window with its blinds closed, but yet still, light poked through them at what I assumed to be during the midday hours. My vision was blurry and I felt an immense pain in my head, as if it were throbbing violently, the blood unable to pump through its vessels. Himmler looked towards me and saw that I was awake. He walked up to my bed and read my vitals, saying into a microphone in his suit-jacket collar,

“Nurses, Heinrich needs more anti-hypertensives. His blood pressure and heart rate are going through the roof. Get him the nanobot-particulate conjugates so they can target the specific endothelial cells in the body. Heinrich, are you alright? Do you need some water? I know you must be thirsty by now. Nurses, get him some water.”

Heinrich moved towards the window and opened the blinds to let some light into the room, which blurred my vision even more and made feel disoriented. I rubbed my eyes to get the mucosa off of my corneas, and it seemed to work. I then said to Himmler,

“What I saw in that place, was ungodly. It was horrid Reichsführer Himmler. I would not wish that fate on my worst enemies. Where is Hannah? Where is everyone? Are we still in the Elite-Korps laboratories? I’m out of the machine right?” I asked Himmler.

Himmler looked back to me and said,

“Heinrich, relax. You’re delusional. Yes, you’re here in the laboratories. You’re on the seventh floor, in the infirmary. You’re resting and healing from your traumatic experience. The Machine of Flesh, as you describe it, is not meant for officers like you. We just needed someone like you, who has the wherewithal to describe what the Realm of Flesh was like, we needed someone strong like you Heinrich. You are a man of strong mental resolve, you are a tough warrior. You have been through much and are dedicated to the Reich. You wanted to risk your life finding agents of the Resistance and have proved your loyalty to us.

We could not find anyone better than you to test the Machine of Flesh and come back to this reality to tell us what lies on the otherside. Rest for a few minutes, until the nurses come in and rejuvenate you back to normalcy. You need your rest Heinrich. I will be here. If anything happens to you, Hitler will have me in that Machine of Flesh next and I will probably not be coming out of it." Himmler said.

I found it strange that Heinrich Himmler, of all people, was somewhat compassionate and caring. Perhaps like as he revealed to me in his final statements before I went back to sleep, he was concerned about his own skin instead of mine. Funny, how we are concerned about the flesh that binds our experience to this world, but not of the experience itself. In being, there was so much lost in the objective physicality of what it meant to be. People, places, and things always governed what it meant to be, never what it felt like being was. All of this was encapsulated in the flesh suits we adorned and presented ourselves in, it in itself lacking the true subjective nature of being. I was getting too philosophical, and perhaps was delirious to the trauma and torture I went through.

My enemies were right in front of my eyes, right beneath the skin, trapped in their own flesh as well, suffering a similar fate to my own. Flesh was all that bound us to this place, and without it, we would be nothing. Perhaps people, places and things were truly governed by the Realm of Flesh and its ulterior reality, the true world. Forms of things as they were, as they are and as they will be, only describable through the chains of flesh. The ties that bound us to the place was the flesh, the sinew of muscle and bone, and the subjective presence of the state, it in itself, governed by those within the flesh.

As my vision faded out and my head turned from side to side, Heinrich Himmler hovered over me and grinned. Under his breath, I heard him say,

"The Reich is within you and without you Heinrich. You are strong, you shall persevere. You are a true Aryan, a noble confidant to Hitler and our people. Do not waver at the things which you came to fear in the Realm of Flesh, The Reich is wit... "

And after that, I could remember no more. As I faded out of consciousness, the haunting memories of The Realm of Flesh, the carnality of orgies in the realm, the ungodly beasts and the people trapped within it came back to haunt me. In my dream state, I imagined myself slowly withering away, with first my SS uniform melting upon me, and dripping off of my skin, and then my skin melting and dripping off of my flesh. I was running from the carnal orgy at the center of The Realm of Flesh, or atleast what I had come to know of it, only to run in place, running further but getting closer to it with each passing step. By the end of the dream, I had turned my head to see the beating heart of Christ, emasculated and deprived, in the core of the entangled corpses. Seeing that I had no strength to run further, I reached out into it and the pleasurable moaning of the corpses eclipsed all other concerns, it was like the orgy had reached into my own instinctual drive and lured me towards a craving for the final consummation, the orgasm unto death.

And when I awoke some hours later, in the infirmary, I denied the orgy, I denied the Christ as it had appeared to me. Christ was not here, in this forsaken real world, nor was he in the forsaken Realm of Flesh. All that had come upon me were temptations of the flesh and sin, yet I found myself captivated by them. I could no longer think that I was a good man, if I followed the will of

the Reich and the will of Hitler, to conquer all in the name of the Aryan race, to conquer the means by which the flesh came into being. As I opened my eyes, Himmler was gone and it was now night time. I assumed that most of the scientists and day shift duty soldiers had left their posts. Here I was, tied up to the saline drips, intravenous umbilical cords of machines keeping me alive and other unknown substances in my body.

I tried not to cry, given all that had happened to me, with the camera in the top right hand corner of the room watching me. Hitler, probably fast asleep by now, would review the footage and find any signs of weakness in his new head-of-command at the Elite-Korps. I had to maintain the strong resolve which was within me to deny my infidelity to the state, and to keep alive the illusion of my commitment to it. I grabbed a remote by my bedside to turn on the Reich-sanctioned state television, and looked for something relaxing to watch. Channel by channel I flipped through, until on channel four hundred and twenty, I found a constantly repeating cycle of thunderstorms playing. The thunderstorms on the channel soothed me, with the sound of rain pattering on window sills, it lulled me back into a false sense of security, like a child being nursed to sleep. This was probably Hitler's favorite channel I thought, in which he channeled his inner fears and anxiety and laid them to rest. I fell asleep to the rain, hungry, wondering when I would get my next meal.

By the time the morning arrived, I had fallen into a deep slumber without dreaming of anything in particular. Nothingness was the next set of dreams, as if my conscious waking state had passed from thunderstorms and rain drops pattering on windowsills to just darkness, then light. As the light crept in from the small rectangular window above the seat where Himmler sat, a nurse barged into my room to check my vitals.

"Ah, Colonel Schriever! It's good to see you awake. How are you feeling? Feeling better?" She asked, frantically.

I scratched my head with the saline drips and cords attached to my arm and I said,

"Yeah, I guess you could say that.. Mrs uhh, Mrs, what's your name?"

She looked at me and walked over towards my bed, removing the saline drips and other cords attached to the various machines around me.

"My name is Anne, Anne Rittenbacher. I've been a nurse in the infirmary since the laboratories came into being. I know I shouldn't be saying this, but I'm glad you're here Colonel Schriever. It gets boring around here with no patients to take care of. As a matter of fact, you're our only one! Barely anyone gets injured around here, as you know, the infirmary has just become a sanctuary for all of the mental abuse and psychological trauma that happens in those laboratories downstairs. Heaven knows what goes on down there, I'd just rather not know. So, tell me, do you feel any pain Colonel Schriever?"

I felt my body, my chest, my hands, my arms and my legs. Besides increasing my hunger pangs and a thirst for a soda, I felt no pain or suffering.

"No Anne, I, I don't feel any pain whatsoever. Am I allowed to return my post in the laboratories or am I still under orders not to return?"

I shouldn't have asked a nurse that question. There was no way she would have known what Hitler and Himmler wanted me to do.

She looked at me with a deadpan expression, as if to silently mock my decision to go to the place that put me through hell and back.

"As far as I know Colonel Schriever, you're to remain here until Reichsführer Himmler returns. He will be arriving shortly. Come with me and enjoy a breakfast in the infirmary. Himmler expects you to be showered and in your full SS attire before he arrives. It's only the proper and formal thing to do. An SS officer of the Reich has no place in hospital gowns, it speaks lowly of the Reich!" The nurse awkwardly, and with a tinge of fear, said to me.

As the cords disconnected from my body and I regained my freedom, I got out of the hospital bed feeling great. I followed the nurse into infirmary dining room and she asked me,

"What would you like for breakfast Heinrich? The Elite-Korps is sharing some of their technologies with the civilians up here, and we can make your food very quickly. The chefs were astounded by the nanobot fabrication techniques that can make food out of literally dirt! But that's a little off topic. What would you like, honey?" The nurse said, grabbing my arm and looking suggestively into my eyes.

"I'd like a steak, eggs, bacon and cheese sandwich. Make it Reich Standard cheese, you know, the white cheese. I like that cheese a lot, even though many say it has a manufactured taste. I'll be right back. The restroom is down the hall and to the right, as far as I remember correctly, right?"

The nurse smiled and took her hands off of my arm,

"Yes Colonel Schriever, relieve yourself and come back. Your meal should be ready in ten minutes."

I walked in my hospital gowns towards the bathroom to relieve myself after a night of being constrained in bed. After relieving myself and washing my hands thoroughly I found myself in the dining room feeling like a psychiatric ward patient in my hospital gown. The infirmary workers were chit chatting and enjoying their breakfasts. When my meal came, I was astounded by the size of the portions. It was a third of a meter long sandwich, absolutely packed with meats and cheese.

Nurse Anne Rittenbacher whispered into my ear,

"Good choice Heinrich. You need all that cholesterol and protein to keep that cock nice, strong and hard. I'd love to see it Heinrich. I know you're a big boy. A naughty boy. All the girls in the infirmary love you Colonel Schriever. They think you're quite the handsome and charismatic man."

The nurse winked at me and I whispered back to her,

“You’re too much Anne. I appreciate the offer though, I might consider it. Hannah doesn’t have to know.”

I licked my lips as to feign my appreciation for the food, but Anne knew that I was licking my lips for her. I devoured my food quickly to get into the shower, leaving me little time to really enjoy the food. I found it intriguing how paramilitary technologies were now being used by civilians for common day things, like making food. I knew in my mind that this wasn’t authentic bacon, authentic cheese, or authentic bread. It was all assembled, molecule by molecule, from dirt and other cheap elemental materials into sterile food. My taste buds really couldn’t tell any difference from what was authentic and what was not. I thanked the nurse and headed towards the infirmary showers to take a quick and hot shower. As I let the shower warm up, the feeling of hot, steaming water running all along my body rejuvenated me and put me in good spirits. The washing away of the grime of a hospital bed, the washing away of the Realm of Flesh purified me in the baptism of the natural; Water, water from God’s purified Earth. But where was God now, knowing that the Realm of Flesh was our destiny for all time? I felt abandoned and sick to my stomach at the same time that I felt rejuvenated by the shower.

Perhaps, like I had read in the Buddhist paraphernalia I once held within my possession, the gurus of India and Nepal were right. Perhaps in the cycle of life, death and reincarnation, we were meant to meditate and find the inner truth of Nirvana, freeing us from the ties that bind. The ties that bind stitched us together, like a patchwork of flesh lacerated by the sharp knife that was life itself. We were all one in the same, an injury to another was like an injury to one’s self. And the Realm of Flesh was our punishment, our redemption, our chance to escape the purgatory of karma into the chaos of the real world. I scrubbed the grime, rid my body of the dirt and dead skin cells covering my skin. When I got out of the shower, I felt much more content knowing that I didn’t smell like shit, and was somewhat more presentable despite my obvious psychological trauma.

In the infirmary shower waiting room, I saw that the nurses had brought in fresh underwear along with my full regalia and attire. I put on my clothes and donned my uniform, making sure in the shower mirror that my pins, badges, and cordelia were properly aligned and in the right places. I made my way back to the dining room and saw Anne, waiting there with nothing to do and no injured soldiers or civilians to feed and take care of.

“Anne, one last thing, would you mind making me a coffee before the Reichsführer comes back? I would like a french vanilla cappuccino, with a lot of artificial sugar in it. The zero calorie sweetener. Also, make sure the milk doesn’t overpower the coffee as well as the converse. I like to taste the bitterness of the coffee in relation to the milk and sugar. Thank you Anne,” I said.

Anne nodded quietly and went back into the kitchen to make me my coffee. Along with my clothes and uniform, my personal affects, like my smartphone were included in the things left in the shower waiting room. I took out my phone to see the day’s events, to see if the Reich had gone to absolute hell while I went through the Realm of Flesh and my temporary coma. I opened the web browser and went to Reich Zentral to see the news in Germany, and the Greater Reich.

“HITLER DECLARES MARTIAL LAW. ALL CITIZENS SUBJECT TO SEARCHES AND DETENTION.

POLICE STATE IN EFFECT”

My eyes zoomed into the first two lines and everything else on the front page of Reich Zentral blurred out in my vision. I couldn't believe it, but what were you to expect of Nazi Germany? We were living in a defacto police state to begin with, but the direct declaration of martial law was unsettling. Clearly, in the time between my coma and this morning, something bad had happened. Perhaps it was the rumored Resistance which I had heard of, and had made up as my defense against my possession of paraphernalia. I tapped the first article on the page to see what exactly the ruckus was about, and why we had gone from a state of peace to a state of martial law, especially considering there was no credible threat to the Reich beyond the rumored Resistance.

“HITLER DECLARES MARTIAL LAW.
ALL CITIZENS SUBJECT TO SEARCHES AND DETENTION

It has come to the attention of the Führer that there is a group of rebels that has infiltrated the Reich. The Resistance, as it is called, informally, is a group of saboteurs trying to destroy the Reich from within. Comprised of Aryans and Untermenslich, the group has been labeled by the state as a technologically savvy and technological radical extremist group. Their full numbers are unknown to the Reich and an investigation has been ongoing for sometime.

All citizens of the Reich are subject to searches and involuntary detention for questioning, extrajudicially, to sniff out the root and cause of the resistance. In the case that you are detained, provide all necessary papers and contacts which can vouch for your innocence. If these things are not provided, you will be assumed to be a part of the Resistance and may be detained for an arbitrary period of time until your innocence can be proven.

• Adolf Hitler, Führer of Nazi Germany
STORY IN PROGRESS, MORE UPDATES TO COME”

By the time I put down my phone, my coffee was ready and Anne had come to my table to serve me. She looked at me with worried eyes, I could see that she was on the verge of crying herself.

“Have you seen the news Anne? What have you heard about The Resistance? Have you heard about the martial law?” I asked.

Anne served me my coffee and I took a sip. It was delicious, just how I had asked for it.

“I'm concerned Colonel Schriever. This possibly could be another purification, another genocide of the untermensch and the slaying of innocents. I know I can't talk about these things and it may put me in a risky position, but it's how I feel Heinrich. I'm scared, very scared.” Anne said, trembling.

I took another sip of the coffee and let the taste marinate in my mouth before swallowing it, then exhaling through my nose. I always did this with coffee and nicotine juice that I vaporized. All the

research said that the olfactory receptors in the nose play a large part in the taste that we experience, so I wasn't one to let my sensory perception go to waste. I put the coffee down and said,

"I'm sure there must have been a terrorist attack or something. The Führer wouldn't just randomly declare martial law in times of peace. What would he do that for? There's no one to declare war against, no national emergency as far as I'm aware of. The climate is in stasis and under our control, even politically so. Listen Anne, I need to know if Reichsführer Himmler is back yet. I'm tired of waiting for him."

Anne placed her hand on my shoulder and said,

"Reichsführer Himmler will be here shortly Colonel Schriever. I have to attend to other matters. Even as a civilian, I have a job to do. I must report on your status and file it in the system that you're ready for duty. In all honesty, that's what the hold up problem is Heinrich. I just wanted to talk to you for a little bit, and give you some rest. Would you like to see Reichsführer Himmler now, or would you like more time to rest?"

I thought about it for a second and felt conflicted. I wanted a cigarette, to perhaps crawl back in bed, and watch internet videos until I fell asleep. This was one of my biggest problems in life, the lack of motivation after I lose momentum. A weekend off, a day off, a holiday weekend off especially drained all motivation I had to go back into the meat-grinder that was the Elite-Korps laboratories. But damn, it felt so good to achieve the things I had accomplished with my scientists, albeit it was done for a nasty purpose, to further the deadliness of the state, there was satisfaction in being exponentially many orders of magnitude above the state of the art in the civilian world.

"I'll tell you what, let me smoke a cigarette and finish my coffee and then you can tell Reichsführer Himmler that I'm ready to see him. Tell him, or input in the system that I need my daily ration of TPE-49. I'm feeling quite stupid without it and perhaps undermotivated because of its quick elimination clearance and the fact that it's almost out of my system," I said.

Anne smiled at me and said

"I'll do that for you Colonel Schriever. I'll say you're still finishing your breakfast and having a cigarette with coffee. I have to update something in the system and the cameras are watching. If you feel like you are ready for duty, you are ready. You are a strong man Colonel Schriever, I know you'll make it through all of this, martial law or not. See you later Colonel Schriever."

Anne took her hand off of my shoulder and made her way towards the infirmary office to update the Elite-Korps personnel attendance management records. I knew that Reichsführer Himmler was probably watching me through the cameras, investigating my every move and scrutinizing my waste of time with Anne. I reached into my side pocket of my uniform and pulled out my pack of Reichbrenner 88s, a black butane lighter and my vaporizer. I needed nicotine as much as I needed TPE-49, both drugs had become such a part of my life now. Nothing would quite replace the feeling of combusting tobacco, the dizziness of the carbon monoxide asphyxiation and the neurotransmitter rush of endorphins, dopamine and adrenaline. I put the cigarette to my lips, sparked it up and took a deep inhale of the smoke. Serenity was bestowed upon me by the

cigarette as a rushing and undulating wave of calmness overtook me. On the infirmary dining room table, Anne had brought me a fresh ashtray to ash my cigarette along with my coffee. As the Reichbrenner burned, I ashed it, and hit it, ashed it and hit until it was done. I felt satisfied and finished my coffee by gently sipping on it.

As I finished the coffee and cigarette, Reichsführer Himmler came into the infirmary dining room and I stood at attention and saluted him.

“Sieg Heil Reichsfurher!” I exclaimed, while saluting Himmler.

Himmler saluted back and said

“Sieg heil!”

“I’m sure you have heard, or seen on the news that we are now in a state of martial law Heinrich? Are you ready for duty? We are going to go back to the sixth floor underground laboratory, back to The Machine of Flesh? Your former subordinate associate, Captain Adalbert Braun is there with his child. Through his child, we have found out where the Resistance is hiding. He gave us some information which tipped us off. Apparently, his son, Lucien Braun, is a schizophrenic wild child. He’s been denying the child rejuvenative therapies and using him as a conduit into The Realm of Flesh. The child is young, eight years old to be exact.”

I was shocked to hear that Lucien was a schizophrenic. I couldn’t believe that Adalbert would have denied his son medical care and this put my entire faith of him into question.

“And you’ve put him into The Machine of Flesh? He’s just a child Reichsführer, surely there could have been some way around this,” I said.

Reichsführer Himmler gave me a stern look of disappointment, furrowing his brow and grimacing at me, then yelling at me

“Are you calling my authority into question Colonel Schriever? I am the Reichsfurher-SS, one of the most important people in the Greater Reich. I could have you court martialed and thrown back into The Machine of Flesh for even questioning me like that. Is that what you want Heinrich?!”

I knew I bit off more than I could chew trying to question Himmler’s authority. Nothing was below the Nazis to experiment on children, especially with Josef Mengele in the mix, now that I knew what he was truly like.

“Forgive me Reichsführer. No, please, spare me from that hell. Let’s just get this over with. Let’s see what the child is going through in The Machine of Flesh and see what information he has on the Resistance.”

Reichsfurher Himmler eyed me up and down and smiled at me,

“That’s more like it Colonel Schriever, let’s go.”

All was orderly and yet frenetic in the lower level laboratories as we made our way to The Machine of Flesh. Scientists, engineers, SS officers and soldiers were interspersed in the work being done and they paid no attention to Reichsführer Himmler and I as we discreetly made our way to the sixth floor underground laboratories through the access ramps to the lower levels. Himmler opened the large vaulted steel door and as we entered the room which contained The Machine of Flesh, the bright fluorescent lights in the ceilings lit up and exposed the child in The Machine of Flesh, and next to him, was his father the former Captain, Adalbert Braun, tied and gagged in a wooden chair next to his son.

As we approached the two, Dr. Josef Mengele's voice came over the loudspeakers hidden in the dim corners of the room not illuminated by the bright fluorescent lights.

"Welcome Reichsführer Himmler and Colonel Schriever. We have found the heart of the Resistance here in the two subjects in the middle of the chamber. Let me cut straight to the chase Heinrich, your former Captain, Adalbert, has been sheltering a Jew! Lucien Braun, as we have analyzed through the imagery he has seen in The Realm of Flesh, has the soul of a Jew himself!"

I tilted my head to the side in shock towards where Mengele presumably was speaking from and had more questions than answers at this point.

"What exactly do you mean, the soul of a Jew, Dr.Mengele?!" I shouted out towards the right hand side fogged glass near the ceiling of the chamber, where behind its cover, Dr.Mengele was observing us.

"Don't interrupt me you fucking mongrel! We haven't had enough time to analyze your soul either, but you were a designer baby. You might be a Jew too! Anyway, like I was saying, as you can see by Lucien's exposed brain, we have obtained a better resolution by implanting the nanoscopic electrodes deep into his brain and injecting him with nanobots to see the exact things he is seeing in The Realm of Flesh.

We saw what was going on in his mind, and in that place. He has a connection to a Jewish bloodline we thought that we had extinguished many years ago. Once this became clear, I had to alert Hitler to the truth about what is going on within the Reich. Many Aryans and Untermensch are not of pure blood and they must be purged as we control the direct cycle of incarnation in the Reich.

We have interfaced with The Realm of Flesh and we will conquer it, just like we have done with this place!"

Dr.Mengele started cackling maniacally, like in a scene out of one of the old time movies I once had, but this laughing was not meant to be taken as a joke. Josef Mengele was binge drunk on power and he was out of control. I looked towards the child and saw him in the chair, unconscious, frothing at the mouth with his father, my once trusted subordinate staring at me restrained next to him. A linen cloth was stuffed in his mouth, his hair disheveled and his eyes were bloodshot.

In that moment, I felt like breaking down and sobbing uncontrollably. I trusted Adalbert, but I wanted to keep my life. I wanted to join the Resistance to avenge the things the Nazis had done and it would take a man on the inside to get it done. It would take a man who could traverse between the realities that were and break the ties that bind. In this moment, as if I were high on the cannabinoids that Manfred had given me, the stern face of Hitler was superimposed onto my mind's eye. The unrelenting look of fear, inhumane cruelty and disappointment fogged my vision. Was I still high I thought? How could the image of Hitler be so clear in my mind's eye, although it had been some days since I had been with Manfred and ingested those drugs?

Reichsführer Himmler turned to me and handed me a pistol, saying

“Show us your allegiance to the Reich, Heinrich, empty this pistol's magazine into Adalbert's head. As far as we know, he was a major part of the Resistance. Do it Heinrich. DO IT NOW!”

I took the pistol and cocked the chamber back and walked straight to Adalbert. He looked at me and tears began flowing down his face. His cries were muffled by the linen cloth in his mouth, and he took one last opportunity to look at his child, while still sobbing. I placed the end of the pistol in between his eyebrows and fired a shot. The first shot went through cleanly, expelling most of Adalbert's brain matter and knocking his entire body towards the floor behind him.

In my mind, I heard his son say

“You will regret killing my father Heinrich. I am here, in The Realm of Flesh, watching you. You are not a true hero of the Resistance, you are a coward.”

With Adalbert lifeless body on the floor, I held back enough tears to flood the world and unloaded the magazine into Adalbert's head. I looked back at Reichsführer Himmler and he was smiling.

“Good Heinrich, we didn't need him anyway. We're only concerned about the child. Now, since he is unconscious, we need you to do one last thing Heinrich, we need you to go back into The Realm of Flesh and figure out exactly what this child is doing there. He has some strange power, as we have ascertained.

The scientists, engineers and soldiers in the laboratories are reporting that they are getting messages from the child, telepathically. He may be one of many telepaths in the Resistance, and we need our own. Go into the Realm of Flesh and figure out what's going on.”

Reichsführer Himmler then spoke into a lavalier microphone in his uniform collar saying,

“Dr.Mengele, order the engineers in the cybernetics laboratory to produce another nanoscopic electrode cap and to produce another chair for Heinrich to sit in. We need him back in The Realm of Flesh to figure out what this child is doing there and how he is interfacing with us.”

Some minutes later, a group of soldiers brought in a wooden chair for me to sit in along with a nanoscopic electrode cap. They placed the chair directly across from Lucien, as ordered by Reichsführer Himmler and they restrained me in the chair. Reichsführer Himmler stood in between the child and myself and said

“Place the cap on him. Heinrich, listen up closely. You are to enter the Realm of Flesh and to figure out how this child has taken control of The Realm of Flesh. We might have to execute him given that we do not know the true extent of his powers. Find the families of the Resistance, and give us names. We need to know how the child is helping the Resistance, but more importantly, who to target in the next wave of purges.”

I sat across from Lucien, looking at him frothing at the mouth, in an unconscious state, as if he were a sedated but rabid dog. They placed the cap on me and suddenly, everything had faded to black.

I found myself, sometime later, in front of the massive orgy of skinned-and-peeled bodies. My primal instinct, fear, drove me to start running away from the orgy once more. I ran as hard and as fast as I could, looking back every so often, to notice that the further I ran, once again, the closer I was to the orgy. At some point, I became so exhausted I gave up fighting this invisible treadmill pulling me faster than I could run away. I reached the orgy and found myself in the middle of the literal beating heart of it, like I saw last time. The moaning orgasmic pleasure to be heard from the corpses overtook my sense of hearing and I kneeled to the floor, writhing in pain, grasping my ears. Then, what I presumed to be a woman, came up to me offering her hand in sex.

She grabbed my hand and guided me towards her hips, and then, the sounds of sexual pleasure stopped. Outside of the beating heart, the orgy was now a fractal pattern of infinite sexual partners spiraling into the abyss of The Realm of Flesh. Perhaps this was illusory, and what I was feeling was only between this woman and I. She looked into my eyes, flesh, blood and all, and saw through me for what I really was--an outsider. She dropped my hand and walked away from me, into the infinite fractal of the consummation of flesh. As I reached out towards her, she disappeared, and I found myself free falling at a great speed towards nothing. I could feel the roaring air rushing across my flesh, blistering me without the protection of skin. My body then began to tumble in place as gusts of wind tossed me around like a ragdoll, from side to side, up and down, and in circular movements. The disarray caused me to vomit in this place, spiraling my vomit around my corpse, and the disgusting nature of this caused me to vomit even more.

The vomit filled my eyes and lungs as I tossed and tumbled around in circles, free-falling into nothing. A gust of wind then set me up right, and cleared the bodily fluids from my presence. I looked down and saw an ocean of corpses, interweaving and interlocked with one another, organized orderly by some Boschian-otherworldly physics. I thought to myself,

“This ocean, for it to be this organized, must be full of corpses. The entire thing.”

As I accelerated towards the corpses, I looked down at my sides and saw that all along the horizon of this place, was an infinite amount of corpses possibly an infinite depth all flowing in waves, interlocked and interweaving with one another. In front of me, there was a shoreline, and one single corpse, of a boy, which I presumed to be Lucien Braun.

“VOOOSH!”

I hit the corpse underneath me at such a great velocity that it had softened the blow of the position I assumed, a thin knife's edge diving stance, so as not to break my limbs. With the corpse still under my feet, and myself, submerged within the sea of corpses, I tried to swim from the depths of death towards the surface. I flailed about, my limbs hitting other limbs, face to face with other faces eyes wide open, with blood, bone, sinew and flesh obscuring my vision. I could not swim with such a viscosity of corpses, its thickness and gravity, pulling me deeper under the waves of bodies. With every breath I inhaled, bodily fluids filled my lungs, and I tried my hardest to move my limbs against the riptide of bodies underneath me and above me, thrashing me about in the disturbed ocean. With my presence, it seems, the ocean was unsettled and now pulling me deeper and deeper into the clutches of flesh.

As I ran out of breath, the bodily fluids filled my lungs and I started to asphyxiate. The blood, mucus, semen, saliva, pus and bile filled my nostrils, ears, mouth and my asshole. I became inflated and overbloomed, when at long last, when the suffering was too much to bear. I passed out in the sea of corpses.

Sometime later, I found myself on the shoreline, with Lucien Braun looking over me and the sea of corpses. Once he saw that I was awake, he looked towards me and said

"This place Heinrich, is a special one. I, I am, I am a special child. My father may have kept this secret from you, about my abilities, but you knew that I was not a designer child. They said I had schizophrenia, an illness of madmen, but once I grew to learn what powers had been bestowed upon me, I decided against the rejuvenative therapies to cure my ailment. God, whether he be part of my fantastical delusions, or real, has forsaken all of us. He has bestowed upon me, a blessing and a curse.

The blessing is the ability to interface with this place, in my dreams, in my waking state, in my mind, and to interface with humanity. I am humanity's one and only true conduit. Through me, all things shall pass, and after me, all shall remain opaque.

The curse, is madness. The inability to discern truth from fiction, the real from the absurd, the fantasy from reality. In my mind, I possess yours, and in your mind, you possess mine. But you are unaware of this. Only I can sense these things, and it has driven me to destitution. It has driven me beyond my breaking point, and my will to live, has fractured.

I ask of you Heinrich, why have you done this to me? Why have you done this to us?"

I looked up from the sandy shoreline, which seemingly was made of dense clusters of dead skin cells, towards Lucien Braun. He looked towards me and smirked,

"I know what you're planning on doing Heinrich, it won't work. But try it. Let's see where that takes you. I won't give you what you're looking for."

In this moment, I knew that I could not reach for my usually holstered pistol on my side and shoot Lucien. I lifted myself up off of the ground, with dead skin cells flaking my body and I lunged towards Lucien Braun. Strangling him with all of my might, demanding,

“WHERE ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE RESISTANCE? TELL ME YOU FUCKING BASTARD!

YOU PUT ME IN THIS FUCKING PLACE! WHERE ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE RESISTANCE!?!”

As I strangled the child, he made no attempt to stop my interrogation of him, nor gave any sign that he was willing to submit. At the point that I perceived to be his last breath, he gave a sign of submission by frantically tapping on my arms. I let him go and he said,

“The Reich is within you and without you Heinrich.”

At that moment, I was pulled out of The Machine of Flesh, with my vision cascading backwards, from within and then behind my corpse and into a tunnel of space-time, funneling back into the Earthly dimension that Earth I belonged to. As I awoke in the flesh, the real flesh, I vomited and noticed that I was frothing at the mouth as well.

“We saw everything Heinrich. Hand me your pistol Reichsführer Himmler, Lucien is going into the vats where we can prevent him from interfacing with The Resistance.” A voice said, behind me, sounding seemingly like Adolf Hitler.

As my vision was fading in and out, I was still restrained in the wooden chair, spasming from a lack of water and electrolytes. Before I faded out of consciousness, Hitler appeared to the side between me and the child and lifted his right arm perpendicular to the child’s face and he pulled the trigger. I blinked, and the first shot rang out.

“POW!”

Lucien’s chair fell over and then Hitler unloaded the entire pistol magazine into the child.

“POW! POW! POW! POW! POW! POW! POW!”

I managed to hold out and not pass out until Hitler could speak to me in the seconds following the murder of Lucien Braun.

“There’s something we haven’t told you yet Heinrich, the sixth floor is not the final floor of this laboratory. We’ll tell you all about it when you get some time to recover. Good night Heinrich!” Adolf Hitler said, as I faded out of consciousness.

Chapter Five: Purification

And now we're here. I don't remember much of these past few months, from the place and mindset I am in now. The hellish torture of the otherworld, the Realm of Flesh, left me psychologically scarred and amnetic. In the patchwork of stitched up memories that I can recall, the months following my immersion into the Machine of Flesh were hellish. The Machine itself, a chair and a set of electrodes, was not the real Machine of Flesh. The Realm of Flesh, mechanistic and deterministic in its nature was the real Machine of Flesh. I found myself continually reimmersed into the machine of souls, corpses and flesh to sniff out the members of the resistance, until November 1st when I was relieved of duty from the Elite-Korps and posted to active duty in the streets of Berlin.

I had learned a lot more about room that The Machine of Flesh was housed in and the secretive underground seventh floor chamber that even I was restricted from accessing. Allegedly, from Hitler's mouth himself, the seventh underground floor of the Elite-Korps laboratories was a chamber of souls. In liquid green vats, a homogeneous viscous liquid housed the captured souls of Lucien Braun, Adalbert Braun, Josef Von Staufen and countless other Aryans and Untermensch. Their souls were captured by zero point energy field manipulators housed within the walls of the sixth floor chamber, unable to escape into the world and transition into the Realm of Flesh.

The experience with the real Machine left me feeling not curious and dissuaged about any more of the secret underpinnings of the Nazi's gambit at exponential scientific progress. Out on the streets of Berlin, with my new subordinate commander, Ulrich Starkermann, I enjoyed the

somber irony of my new duty; To get fresh air out on the streets and to interrogate members of the Resistance. That's how it was supposed to go, but the extrajudicial process was much darker than that. The first day of the interrogations was nothing short of brutal, and left me more disillusioned than invigorated by the Nazi cause.

On the corner of Keine Street and Rückkehr Boulevard in uptown Berlin, we walked down towards the end of the cul-de-sac on Keine Street from our parked and blacked out sport utility vehicle to begin the targeting of innocent civilians and resistance members alike. Ulrich, a strong bodybuilder was quite old fashioned. He still worked out in a time where rejuvenative therapies could enable you to gain muscle mass quite easily. He enjoyed the pain I guess, the displeasure from one's own work that nanobots or other therapies could not replace. We went to the end of the cul-de-sac and knocked on the first door on the clipboard that Ulrich had in his hand.

The house was unassuming, almost like a small hamlet in big city Berlin, with a small garden out in the front, full of plants still in bloom as winter approached. The gray stucco siding and front gave it the anthropomorphized characteristic of being a solitary home, a serious home for serious people. As Ulrich and I looked down at the clipboard, we saw the pictures of the two residents of the home. An elderly couple (in terms of chronological age), suspected of supplying the Resistance with weaponry and stimulant drugs for combat purposes. Their pictures were framed next to their names and list of offenses, as well as pictures of their children and grandchildren.

"Martin Unschuldig and Katherine Unschuldig. Interesting last names Heinrich, very interesting. Innocent they may be, but I doubt it. They must be interrogated, and if proven guilty, purged."

I knocked on the door and rang the doorbell. No answer for a minute or two. I looked towards the window blinds next to the door and saw them shuffling as fingers and a nose poked through the lower blinds. I knocked two more times, and thrice, and from behind the door I heard an elderly woman say

"Warte eine minute, ich bin gleich da!"

A few seconds later, the door opened and I was greeted by the elderly woman in the picture. Elderly was probably the wrong term to use, since we had age rejuvenative therapies which reverted our biological age back to eighteen years old, but kept most of our features gained in aging intact. She was very attractive, blonde, slim and slender. I believe the term used in the past in Germany by soldiers was, "a mother I'd like fucking.", or colloquially, a MILF. Her blue eyes stared into my soul and she began to quiver with the overbearing presence of Ulrich and his muscular body. Perhaps she was both at once, attracted and scared by his manliness. Perhaps it was the SS uniforms, despite this she asked

"May I help you two officers? Please, come in, make yourselves at home."

"Danke, Fräulein." I said, with a stern face.

As we walked into their home, we were immediately led into the living room where Mr.Unschuldig was lazily relaxing by the fire on a large comfy-chair. There was a dog which greeted us at the door and Mrs.Unschuldig shooed her away.

“May I help you two men to some coffee? I know how hard you SS men work, keeping the Resistance at bay, and all the scientific work you guys are doing now. It’s amazing what you strong men have been doing.” Mrs.Unschuldig said as she caressed my arm. From behind the chair I could see Martin Unschuldig looking at me, worried, perhaps that I might steal his wife from him. I could tell that he was submissive in this relationship and that he was no stranger to cuckoldry, or perhaps that was my projection upon him.

“Yes, I’ll have some coffee Mrs.Unschuldig. And you Ulrich, would you like some as well?”

Ulrich, unwavering, without a flinch, knew what his mission was here. He wanted to get straight to the point, while I wanted the Unschuldigs not to run away in fear. I wanted them to comply through a soft surrender, while Ulrich wanted to capture them like cavalry chasing down cowards in a relentless route. I thought to myself how brutal and fucked up targeting these people was. These were probably innocent people, who were good upstanding citizens. At this point, the power of Nazi might was too strong. I could not resist against both the Nazis and the fabled Resistance at the same. The two sides of this struggle were pulling at me in a tug of war for my soul, and my fate-- no matter how I tried to cut the ties that bind-- the struggle would probably end with me in The Realm of Flesh, forever, I thought to myself.

“Yes Mrs.Unschuldig, I’ll have a cup of coffee. You know us SS men, we do enjoy our stimulants. Approved by Hitler, sanctioned by the Reich. They keep us on point, our commitment to justice and the pursuit of truth, as it was meant to be, unwavering and strong.”

Ulrich took a moment to pause and look at Martin Unschuldig. He eyed him up and down, as if in my mind, to analyze him for insubordination and infidelity to the state. In Ulrich’s mind, I believed Martin had another lover other than Katherine Unschuldig, and that was the Resistance.

“Martin Unschuldig? Come into the kitchen. We have to speak to you as well.” Ulrich said after clearing his throat and looking at his clipboard.

Martin looked from behind the lazy chair and threw a piece of paper into the fire. Destroying evidence I thought, or perhaps throwing away a scrap of the day’s newspaper, a relic of the past that belonged in the fire as well.

As we made our way into the kitchen, a small window let in light from the small backyard, as the sun shone down into it. The particles of dust in the air were illuminated by the rays of light, eventually landing on the kitchen table and the photons scattered from this table illuminating the room with a pleasant white aura. The coffee was already made, and a brewed cup was in the process of being stirred by Mrs.Unschuldig. The kitchen was homely, adorned with artifacts and trinkets of simple living in Berlin. Pictures of the children, memorabilia from their youth like innocent childhood drawings adorned the refrigerator door and walls. Trinkets like jewelry and hats were hung on the racks near the living room hallway, adjacent to the door. My colleague Ulrich and I sat down at the small rectangular table in the homely kitchen and awaited our cups

of coffee. Martin Unschuldig followed behind us and the only one left standing was Mrs.Unschuldig, brewing another jug of coffee for us.

We made some small talk about the weather, how the Reich had come so far and then the coffee was ready.

Mrs.Unschuldig asked us,

“How would you gentlemen like your coffee? Sweet? A lot of milk?”

I then said,

“Sweet, artificial sugar if you have it Mrs.Unschuldig. I like a lot of milk in my coffee, make it a nice creamy coffee. I like it a light brown, but not too heavily diluted by the milk and sugar.”

Mrs.Unschuldig smiled at me and said

“Just how I like my coffee, soft and pleasant to the senses. And, you never told me your names. You are..”

Katherine looked at my last name on my name tag on my uniform and my rank insignia on my shoulders and said

“You, you.. Colonel Schriever, I presume?”

“Yes, that’s correct Mrs.” I said.

She then looked towards Ulrich and his name tag and insignias, and said

“And you, you are Second Lieutenant Starkermann? You are quite the Starkermann if I must say, quite big and muscular. Don’t you think Martin?”

Martin, sitting across the table eyed Ulrich up and down, much in the same way that Ulrich had done to him a few minutes ago, and said

“Yes dear, he is a strong Aryan. A strong man, for sure.”

Katherine then looked at Ulrich and asked,

“And you Second Lieutenant Starkermann, how would you like your coffee?”

Ulrich gave her a stern look, furrowing his brow and puckering up his lips tight, like he always did with everyone occasionally so, and said

“Black. No sugar, no milk. I like it scolding hot. Us bodybuilders aren’t too fond of any extra calories that rejuvenative therapies will have to mitigate later on. I try to be as natural as possible.”

Mrs. Unschuldig served us the coffee and we enjoyed it, over some more small talk about things and how they were going. Scalding hot, Ulrich blew on his coffee and added some cold water to it before downing it in a few gulps. I enjoyed my coffee over the small talk, when Ulrich finally got to the point of why we were here.

“Mr and Mrs. Unschuldig, we are sorry to do this, but we must take you to the SS headquarters in Downtown Berlin for questioning. As informed by the SS intelligence services, we have reason to suspect that you are members of the Resistance. You are suspected of supplying weaponry, drugs and vital intelligence to the Resistance. Now--,”

Mrs. Unschuldig then flipped over the table and sent the coffee mugs flying towards the wall, shattering behind us. She dashed for the cupboards and pulled out a pistol from a cupboard, cocking the slide to enter a round into the chamber, yelling to Martin

“Holen sie sich die waffe, die sie hahnrei!”

At the same time that Katherine flipped over the table, I had already had my pistol unholstered and was aiming it at Martin Unschuldig, Ulrich with his hand on his pistol holster, was facing Katherine diagonally with her pointing her gun at him. Martin put his hands up in the air and said

“Katherine, if you shoot them they will swarm upon this house and rescue them. They will be rejuvenated and they'll torture us!”

Katherine in a shooting stance, with one foot in front of the other said,

“Not if I shoot them in the head! Kind of hard to rejuvenate with your fucking brains splattered all over the back of the wall and the floor! And you, you dummkopf, you cuckold, I could care less if you die, your cock doesn't even work anymore!”

In the tense standoff, Martin began crying and dashed towards his wife to disarm her, with Katherine letting off a round into the shoulder of Ulrich and Ulrich yelped in pain,

“AH! You fucking bitch!” He fired a shot into Katherine's leg while she and Martin were fighting, Katherine saying

“You fucking fool! We could have killed them!”

Martin tossed the pistol over to me, but his insolence was too much and this act of redemption would not save him from his fate of torture and his execution. By now, we had attracted too much attention and the neighbors would probably come knocking. The revolution might start here I thought, given how the repression by the state onto the public in the previous months had brought tensions to a fever pitch.

“Ulrich, keep your pistol unholstered and pointed at these traitors. I'll subdue them and handcuff them.”

From my pocket, I pulled out an autoinjector gun full of sedatives to incapacitate the two and prevent myself and Ulrich from sustaining further injuries.

“Quickly, fucking sedate them! I’m fucking bleeding out here Heinrich!” Ulrich yelled out in pain, trying to put pressure on the gunshot wound to clot the blood in the wound and from the inside of his body, it was quickly filling the wound with nanobots and nanoparticulate conjugates.

Katherine was a strong woman. She repeatedly bashed in Martin’s face with a closed fist and bit him, trying to get him off of her. I first injected Martin and loaded the autoinjector gun with another vial of sedatives to incapacitate the two. Due to the small gauge of the needle and its large cross-section, the drugs would be delivered into the bloodstream quickly even from my impromptu and inaccurate injection into their arms. Within a minute, both of them were sedated and I had them handcuffed.

“Quickly Ulrich, bring the car out to the front and I’ll bring them to the car. They’re bleeding out and we need to get them to the headquarters to be rejuvenated. I’ll look about the house for something to stop the bleeding for now. Use your autoinjector gun to inject more nanobots and the rejuvenative-conjugate molecules into your bloodstream to heal that gunshot wound. I’ll deal with Katherine.”

I pulled out another two vials and loaded them into the autoinjector gun and gave Katherine a double dosage of rejuvenative therapies to heal her gunshot wound. Ulrich sprinted out of the house and left the door wide open, like the dumpkoff that he was. I sprinted towards the front door and locked it before any neighbors could come see what was happening. I then made my way throughout the house and looked for a tourniquet I could apply to the wound. In the bathroom, I could only find towels and an assortment of prescription drugs. I took the prescription drugs as evidence and disinfected the towels with isopropyl alcohol from the cabinet. I ran towards the incapacitated Unschuldigs and nursed Katherine’s wounds.

Clearly, with such a hostile reaction I got, the two were guilty in my mind, ironically enough. We had no time to search the place for more evidence. Martin a minute later pulled up to the front of the house and began honking the horn like a madman. From the front door, I could hear him knocking and shouting

“Quick Colonel Schriever, bring them into the car and let’s get the hell out of here! Let me in so I can take one of the bodies!”

Outside, a group of neighbors had gathered to watch our botched extradition of the Unschuldigs, and they knew as well as we did that these two were guilty as sin. We threw the bodies in the car hastily in the backseats and Ulrich put his foot down on the pedal and sped towards the SS headquarters in downtown Berlin, weaving in and out of traffic. In the back of the SUV, I held Katherine Unschuldig in my arms and left Martin behind the backseats. I pulled down her skirt to see that she wasn’t wearing any underwear and quickly rebuked myself for wanting to fondle an incapacitated woman.

Fuck it I thought. I fondled her beautiful clitoris and played with it, when Ulrich, driving like a madman looked in the rearview mirror and said

“What the fuck are you doing Heinrich? Are you fucking serious?”

I pulled down the skirt and said,
“She’s part of the Resistance. We might as well plunder our loot while we can.”

Ulrich squinted at me and said,

“I thought I was the fucked up one. Stop doing that Colonel Schriever, or at least don’t leave any evidence.”

The car was swerving too much to the left and right to fondle the woman, so I let her be. I examined her wound under the tourniquet I applied, and the bleeding had stopped. Remarkably even with the bullet still lodged inside her, she was healing incredibly quickly. I pulled out my combat utility knife from my inner uniform pocket and dug out the bullet from her leg, or what remained of it. The bleeding began again, and I applied the tourniquet. Within ten minutes, we arrived at the SS headquarters. Outside standing at ready attention were two guards and Brigadier General Reinhard Klausewitz, his face red hot with anger.

“WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TWO FUCKING MORONS THINKING? THE NEWS HAS ALREADY REACHED ME THAT YOU TWO IDIOTS FUCKING BOTCHED UP THE EXTRADITION OF THESE SUSPECTED MEMBERS OF THE RESISTANCE! THE POLICE RADIO BLOTTER IS GOING FUCKING HAYWIRE!” Reinhard yelled at the top of his lungs.

I saluted the Brigadier General and Ulrich, still in the car, saluted him from the front seat.

“Brigadier General Klausewitz, we had no choice. The woman wasn’t cooperating she--”

“YOU MADE FUCKING SMALL TALK? YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO CAPTURE THEM THE SECOND YOU HAD THE CHANCE COLONEL SCHRIEVER. YOU FUCKING DUMKPOFF!”

I stood there, still saluting with a crowd gathering across the street, watching the Brigadier General degrade me in front of my subordinate in command, Second Lieutenant Ulrich Starkermann. Klausewitz put his face in the palm of his right hand and calmed down after letting loose all of his pent up rage and frustration.

“It’s too late to change what’s happened. Just get the fucking Unschuldigs into the lower level interrogation rooms and do your fucking jobs. Just forget about the next target, Julian Sicher, we’ll get him the right fucking way, and leave you two morons just to do the interrogation and not the capture. We’ve set out two agents to retrieve Sicher, the right fucking way, instead of what you two imbeciles tried to do.”

The Brigadier General put out his right hand in a knife hand pose towards Second Lieutenant Starkermann, alternating with the knife hand pose directly at our faces, looking back and forth between Starkermann and I, saying,

“Get the fucking Unschuldigs into the interrogation room, the two of you. I’ll send some men to help you get them into the room. Wait here and don’t do anything else that fucking stupid, ever

again. You can sure as hell bet your asses that Reichsführer Himmler and the Führer will know about this!”

I stood there, looking in between Brigadier General Clausewitz and Second Lieutenant Starkermann and thought about how I wasn't made out for this shit. I was just the computer engineer, the science and math guy. How my life had devolved into becoming a henchman for the state was beyond me, it was Hitler's calling for me. I felt at this point, like breaking down and tearing down every wall in between me and the people of this planet. Even if the Unschuldigs were guilty of treason against the state, who was I to stop them? I was just a puppet being strung up by the puppeteers of government, dancing a shameful dance, halfway between this world and another.

The Brigadier General sternly looked at me as if I was fool, and I knew what I had to do.

“Ulrich! Help me get one of them in the basement atleast, for Christ sake!” I yelled out to him nervously.

Ulrich parked the car and switched off the ignition. He opened up the back door of the SUV and we both lifted Katherine Unschuldig into a wheelchair which was brought out by some SS soldiers at the front door. Two other soldiers wheeled out another wheelchair to the back of the SUV and picked up Martin Unschuldig. The two, still steadfastly unconscious, were restrained in the wheelchairs as we brought them to the elevator in the lobby. In the elevator, I checked Katherine's wound on her leg and it had fully healed because of the nanobot injections. Ulrich then said to me,

“So, what were you doing in the car Colonel Schriever? Do you think what you did to that woman was professional or appropriate? We're supposed to represent the state. Not act like savage rapists.” Ulrich said to me, giving me a brief lecture on morality.

I said but two words, “I'm sorry.”

That would be something I'd be saying a lot of in the coming months, in the chaos and disarray that would engulf the Reich, and lead me to this point now, where in my disheveled state, I tell you this story. When the elevator reached the underground interrogation rooms, the stale, musty air smelled of blood and bodily fluids. It smelled like the bacteria in saliva, along with dull and old blood, something which displeased me ever since I first smelled it as a child. In the long and dark corridor of the interrogation floor, pale incandescent lights were swinging about as torturees were slammed against the walls of their thinly insulated rooms, their screams penetrating the dense concrete doors and bulletproof glass windows adorning them.

I wheeled Katherine Unschuldig into room four, the room left deliberately vacant for the Unschuldigs, and some short time later, Martin was wheeled in as well. I set up the two Unschuldigs in the center of the room, after moving a large table with chairs to the back right of the room, where a one way pane of glass which through the other side, spectators from the SS watched us.

I took out of my pocket, my autoinjector gun and loaded two cartridges full of epinephrine and metamphetamine nanobot conjugates that were designed to hit targets directly in the brain and

injected Katherine and Martin. Within seconds, they both gasped for air and their eyes bulged out of their heads, awakening from their deep unconscious comas. Bearing my weight on her arms, with my arms pressing hers down against the wheelchair she was restrained in, I stared directly in Katherine's face and she spat in my face.

"Dummkopf. Was zum teufel denkst du, sie würde tun, du dummkopf?"

I stepped back, wiped the spit off of my face and slapped Katherine across the face.

"You fucking mongrel. Don't think you can ever get away with that again!" I yelled.

"Oh yeah? What do I have to lose you mother fucker?!" She said as she kept repeatedly spitting in my face over and over again.

I lunged towards her and punched her in the face with repeated hooks, almost breaking her neck. She fell unconscious again.

I took out the autoinjector gun and injected her with the nanobot rejuvenative conjugates. Martin, shaking, began crying out loud and saying,

"Please! Why do you have to do this! We'll tell you everything! Please don't do this to us! Katherine, my love, are you okay?!" Martin exasperated in between sobs and tears.

I looked back towards Ulrich and said,

"Give her a few minutes to recover, I'll let you work on Martin."

To the back left side of the room, an assortment of torture tools were available for use by SS officers like Ulrich and myself. Ulrich walked to the table and got a pair of pliers. I stood back and leaned against the front end wall of the room, arms crossed and let Ulrich interrogate Martin. From this perspective, all I could see was the right hand side of the wheelchair with Martin's arm on the wheelchair and Ulrich's large body towering over Martin.

"What were your plans with the Resistance, Martin? Tell us everything and maybe we'll lessen the pain you'll have to suffer, you fucking little bitch!" Ulrich screamed at the top of his lungs, pointing the plier in Martin's face.

"Okay! Okay! Please don't hurt me! We were arming the Resistance, supplying them with drugs and intelligence. Just like you told us!"

Ulrich took the plier to the face of Martin and said to me,

"Come here Colonel Schriever, he's not talking. He's not giving us specifics. I need you to hold him down and tilt his head backwards. I'm pulling one of his front teeth out."

I had to comply with Ulrich's demands. The SS, especially Brigadier General Reinhard Klausowitz would be watching us after the colossal fuck up that was the our initial extraction and extradition. This next extraction had to be done right. I quickly walked behind Martin and held

his head back from the mouth, holding his mouth wide open for Ulrich. In Ulrich's face, I could see a maddening grin as the pleasure from this task was erupting in him, up to the surface where it was imminently visible.

"Please! No, please don't do this to me, I'll tell you more!" Martin screamed, muffled, with the pliers in his mouth.

Ulrich fastened the pliers to one of the front teeth and tore it out savagely, as if to purposely jar and yank multiple teeth out with it.

"ARRRGH!! UHH! PLEASE! PLEASE NO MORE!" Martin screamed in terror as he spat out the blood from his front teeth sockets.

"SPEAK MARTIN! WE WANT DETAILS!" Ulrich screamed.

By this point, Martin Unschuldig was rapidly losing blood and required an infusion of nanobot rejuvenative conjugates to restore his front teeth and stop the bleeding. It would take a while to stop the bleeding from the front teeth by regrowing new teeth, but I had just the thing which could take its place. I took out some moldable biological polymers with an extracellular matrix substrate from my uniform jacket and molded them to his former front teeth, then injected him with sedatives and the nanobot conjugates.

"What are you doing Heinrich? He was ready to speak! We can't have an interrogation like this if we talk to them for five seconds, torture them, knock them out and restore them! They need to speak Heinrich!"

I looked back towards the glass and muttered under my breath,

"I know what I'm doing Ulrich. You're my fucking subordinate here, and you're going to do this interrogation my way. Now, inject Katherine with some epinephrine and methamphetamine. She'll talk now that we've beaten the shit out of her, she'll talk."

I wasn't sure if this was exactly the best method to pursue in interrogating the Unschuldigs, but I was keen to do it. I didn't want to hurt these people, even if they were guilty. Why was I on interrogation duty? My place was in the Elite-Korps. Why was I born into this hellish, totalitarian Uber state? I wished, deep down inside me, that things were different. I wished death upon Hitler, and I wished that the Allies had won the war. This place was no place to live, this planet had gone to a worse fate than the Realm Of Flesh within and of itself.

Upon following my orders, with a look of disgust on his face, Ulrich regrettably woke up Katherine Unschuldig. She once again, spat in Ulrich's face, like she did with me. As Ulrich was about to swing his fist straight into Katherine's face, presumably to knock her out again, I tackled him to the floor and stopped him.

"You fucking dumkpooff! I WILL HAVE YOU COURT MARTIALED FOR NOT FOLLOWING MY ORDERS! DO YOU HEAR ME?!"

In my state of rage, I held down Ulrich Starkermann with all the strength I could muster up. It seemed like this strong man, this bodybuilder, had built a reputation on a weak house of cards; He was portraying himself as this macho man but he could not overpower a dinky man like myself. Ulrich was squirming underneath me as the spit from my mouth dripped down on his face and I could see him become increasingly uncomfortable from being pinned down in this position.

I held him in a guard position with my legs interlocked with his, and I said

“Did you hear me or not Ulrich? Will you follow my orders or will you not? The point of this interrogation is to get information out of the suspects, not to beat them senseless. I know they want us to put on a show, but they’ve been put through enough. If the need arises that we need to extract more information out of them via torture we will do it.”

Ulrich quit fumbling around and lied down in a submissive position then he said

“Fine Colonel Schriever, I will do as you command me to.”

I dismounted Starkermann and dusted myself off. I looked back to see Katherine Unschuldig still struggling in her straps, manically so, like a madwoman, while Martin was incapacitated with his head to the side, drooling. Thinking of my superiors behind the one way mirror, I thought we must have looked like idiots and that Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler and the Führer were watching us. We had to get some information, one way or another. I walked up to Katherine and asked her,

“Are you willing to talk now, you stupid whore? We can do much worse, without restoring you. We could leave you for dead. We could kill you here right now, if we wanted to.”

Katherine spat in my face again and I knew that this would become a recurring pattern.

“I will never talk to you, you fucking scoundrel. You should just kill me now, considering that you will do it anyway.” Katherine said.

I unholstered my pistol and cocked the slide, loading a round into the chamber.

I put it to the side of her head and tilted the gun diagonally so as to get closer to her face.

“Are you sure you’d like to die Mrs.Unschuldig? You could service a few more cocks before you die, it would be a shame if a beautiful blonde like you had to die. That’s all you were good for anyway, servicing dick. I’ll be honest, you got my dick quite hard. Martin might like to watch me get serviced too, by you.”

Katherine then headbutted me by flinging her body to the side within the straps and I staggered backwards.

“You fucking men are all the same. I like sex, but I am not a whore. I am a messenger and a fighter for The Resistance. I will not service you, you shitstain.”

I turned the lever back on my pistol which reengaged its safety mechanism. I then turned to Ulrich and said

“Stay here. I’ll be right back.”

I left the room and tried to enter the room where our superiors were watching. The door was locked. After some persistent knocking, the door opened-in from the other side. I was met by Adolf Hitler, in a neutral disposition. He let me into the dimly lit room, where I walked into the haze of cigarette smoke and met with my superior officers. The officers along with Reichsführer Himmler looked towards me, all smoking cigarettes.

Hitler closed the door and then said to me

“Can’t get her to talk, right Heinrich?”

“Nein mein Führer. Sie wird nicht reden. Die Hündin nervt. Können wir sie einfach töten?” I said.

Hitler put his hand on my right shoulder and guided me to the one way mirror. He then said,

“We gave you the hardest two for a reason Colonel Schriever. She is a hard one to crack, but we already have all the relevant information we need. A city wide crackdown has been happening under my orders. We’ve been commanding and infiltrating The Resistance for the past few hours and we have enough information to confirm who is a part of it and who is not, as far as we are able to determine. You can kill her and Martin as well. We’ve pieced together the major puzzle pieces of The Resistance and we’ve seen the gears behind its machinery, as I previously said. They’re of no use to us now. Good work, despite all of your fuck ups Colonel Schriever.

I am relieving you of duty and allowing you to go back home for today. We’ll handle the rest from here.”

I saluted Hitler and said

“For the Reich, Mein Führer!”

I exited the room and went back into the interrogation room. I spoke to Ulrich in the dimly lit corner and he nodded his head in agreement to Hitler’s orders. I then walked up to Katherine Unschuldig and said

“You should have serviced me you fucking whore.”

I pulled out my pistol, disengaged the safety and shot one round into her head. As her chair arched backwards and her brains splattered on the wall behind her, I took two steps forward and unloaded the rest of the magazine into her body.

“I hate you fucking women. All you want is money, sex, power, aesthetics. Unschuldig my ass, you were as fucking guilty as they come.”

The loud bangs from the pistol gun shots reverberated throughout the room and woke up Martin Unschuldig.

I took two paces to my right and I put the pistol against his temple and said

“This is for The Resistance, Martin, they will never forget all of the hard work you did for them.”

Martin, shocked by the loud gunshots awoke from his sedated unconscious state and screamed

“NO! PLEASE!”

I let my empty pistol magazine fall to the floor and pulled another, fully loaded magazine, out of my trench coat pocket and loaded my pistol.

“Goodnight sweet prince, the Realm of Flesh waits for you.” I said.

I pulled the trigger and Martin’s corpse vaulted towards his left hand side and like with Katherine, I unloaded the entire magazine in him to relieve the day’s stress. I was a cold hearted killer. What would we do now? I was planning on doing more interrogations, more beatings, more torture but Hitler had relieved me of my duty. I guess I could go back home and call it a day, kick back by the hearth and read a few books, or play some games in VR, I thought to myself.

With the blood of the Unschuldig on my hands and trench coat, I looked back towards Ulrich and asked him,

“Got any plans for tonight?”

He was standing there, with arms crossed and folded.

“I’m really at a loss for words Colonel. I thought we were going to have more fun here today. No, I don’t have any plans for tonight. What are you thinking of exactly?”

I still had my pistol in the air and I became cognizant that this may have seemed threatening to Ulrich. I reengaged the safety on the right side of my pistol and reholstered it.

“Let’s go get drunk and fuck some whores Ulrich. It’s been a while since I’ve had some good pussy, Katherine had me salivating for a fresh young woman of the Reich.”

Ulrich tilted his head slightly and raised his eyebrows, in disbelief, saying

“Aren’t you a married man Colonel Schriever?”

“That I am, Second Lieutenant Starkermann, that I am. What my wife doesn’t know won’t kill her. Besides, she thinks I’m on an important mission right now. Let’s just go relieve ourselves of all this bullshit and call it a night. The purification can wait. I’d rather not deal any more with dissidents of the state.”

Second Lieutenant Starkermann nodded in agreement and we made our way out of the room. Before exiting the room, I turned to the corpses of the Unschuldigs and thought to myself,

Jesus Christ. What have I gotten myself into? Did I really want to kill these people? Nothing I could do now about it now, though. The empire is in flames.

My mind was racing from the excessive amount of TPE-49, nicotine and caffeine I had been consuming. It was almost as if I was a schizophrenic on the precipice of waking reality and parapsychosis. It had been this way for a long time and would remain that way still. This was the new way, the exponential ascent into a reality much stranger, much more vicious and much more totalitarian than ever before. As soon as Karl Von Neumann would have his breakthrough of genius that would propel us into the technological singularity, all bets would be off. We would be living in a world much different than the one that existed in the past, if the metaphysics of time were consistent with the notion that the past was no longer here, a figment of our imagination.

I made my way back to my apartment in Berlin to initiate my own ritual of purification; Taking a shower, shaving and donning a fresh set of clothes, all to get ready for the night out on the streets and in nightclubs. At 8:48 PM later that night, I met with Ulrich Starkermann in my civilian clothing outside of Die Anderewelt nightclub, with the events of the day still racing through my mind. The purges had gone undocumented, with the news media suppressed by the state, although everyone knew for sure what was going on--the Reich was still detaining people throughout the night and would continue for the foreseeable future. Ulrich, with his grand stature and bodybuilder bravado was already attracting the females outside of the club. I was more of the charismatic type, but in good shape as well. I preferred to use the Elite-Korps proprietary gene editing technologies and pharmaceuticals to keep in shape, but that isn’t as good of a conversation starter as the qualifier of bodybuilder.

The night was young and so were we. My wife didn’t have to know what we were really up to and how bad we fucked up our work today, I thought. I looked up towards the nightclub’s awning on the facade of the building to see its logo. There the image of a red, smiling two horned devil holding a shot glass in front of a gated river burned into my mind. It reminded me of the Machine of Flesh and how the name of the club was really a metaphor, in my mind, for an altered state of consciousness that permeated through all realities. Ulrich looked towards me while we were waiting in line to get into the club and handed me a cigarette.

“You look like you need one Heinrich,” Ulrich said.

I took the cigarette, Ulrich’s lighter and lit up the cigarette. Within ten seconds I could feel the nicotine surging through my bloodstream as it reached my brain. The synergistic effects of the TPE-49 and the nicotine lifted me up to a state of euphoria that was commonplace in my life. I felt amped, excited and ready to cheat on my wife. I was like the devil on the awning, my face blushing red and full of sin in my mind. This was the way things would be now, deliberate and

intentional as we accelerated towards a society that disregarded morality, stupidity and naivety. I was reminded in my own thoughts of Katherine Unschuldig who voraciously cuckolded her husband. My wife probably cuckolded me too and the only justice that would serve her would be *lex talionis*, the ancient law of retribution.

The ashes from my cigarette disintegrated and dispersed into the climate controlled cool night air as I tapped the cigarette against the air, leveraging the ashes against the weight of the cigarette itself. It felt good to live in times like these, despite of all the wrong things that were happening. Winters felt like spring and were less relenting on the human condition in terms of seasonal dispositions. I flicked the cigarette out into a puddle on the side of the street from sporadic rain showers earlier in the morning. By the time this happened, we were called up to the front of the queue to get into the club.

Ulrich and I flashed our SS badges and the bouncer didn't think twice about letting us in or waving his metal-detecting wand to check for weapons. Inside, all I could see were strobing lights in every color and people dancing in the center of the club like they were on MDMA, which they probably were.

To the left of the main entrance was a bar with ravers clustered around the bartenders waiting for drinks, some with glowsticks in their hands and neon-glowing necklaces on their necks. Ulrich and I made our way to the bar, gliding inbetween the sweaty bodies of the rave-bar, my eyes focusing and scanning for beautiful women at the club. I was hyper focused, in a state of flow, a state usually reserved for my work time. At the bar, the bartenders were performing tricks and tossing bottles in the air, the superfluous nonsense that would usually tick me off if I was at a dive bar waiting desperately to quench my thirst for alcohol. That didn't bother me so much tonight, I was entertained by it as a matter of fact. After a few minutes the bartender, a stocky Aryan, not too dissimilar in looks for Ulrich himself, asked me

"What do you guys want to drink? Looking to get fucked up?"

I put six hundred reichsmarks on the bar top and told the bartender

"Line up six shots, each, of whiskey for me and my friend here. Then, I want two smaller cups of whiskey so we can drink them as the night goes on for my friend and I. Keep the change and decide how much you want for a tip tonight."

The bartender looked at me like I had three heads and said

"That's a lot of fucking money man! But hey, I'll give you what you want. I guess you want a good time tonight. If I see you come up for more drinks, call out my name, *Sebastian*, and I'll serve you guys drinks first."

Ulrich looked at me and over the blaring din of the nightclub, looking at the money and into my eyes and said

"You sure you wanna spend that much?"

I looked back at him and said

“I just don’t give a fuck Ulrich. Hopefully we drink these shots tonight and find a few girls, take them back to my apartment and we’ll fuck the shit out of them.”

I turned to the right end of the bar and saw a familiar face in the crowd of ravers.
It was Manfred Dunst.

He saw me, raised his glass and proceeded to walk over to Ulrich and I. I turned to Ulrich behind me and I said to him,

“You wouldn’t mind if a friend joins us right? He’s a good friend of mine, I just saw him at the end of the bar over there. He’s got a few surprises you might like. Guy’s a drug dealer, a connoisseur of the fine arts. A strange guy, but eclectic nonetheless.”

And like a shadow in the depth of midnight, Manfred Dunst appeared behind Ulrich with our drinks on a platter.

“Enjoy gentlemen. I took the pleasure of bringing you your drinks.”

I didn’t question it. I trusted Manfred, for some strange reason, and I took shot after shot of whiskey with Ulrich. The next few minutes were a blur and I began to feel strange. The last thought in my mind before I blacked out was

“Manfred. The motherfucker drugged me, again. The motherfucker, fuck...”

And I was out cold. The next thing I remembered was being in a dimly lit room, lit by a single red lightbulb in the center of the ceiling, seeing double and feeling comfortable. I waned in and out of consciousness, with sporadic memories of having sex with a beautiful and voluptuous latina, and somehow I knew her name was Marisel. When I finally came to, the room smelled of cannabis and the red light was still on, radiating towards the black paint of the vantablack room’s walls and not reflecting off of them. I ran my hands against the bed I was on, and I felt the velour comforter without a sheet on it. I closed my eyes several times, in between waking and sleeping, to see various shadowy figures moving inbetween a door to my left and a door to my right. Surely I had been drugged by Manfred Dunst, again.

I woke up some hours later with Manfred Dunst and Second Lieutenant Ulrich Starkermann at the foot of my new bed and they were waiting for me to wake up.

“It’s been seven hours. He should be conscious by now. Have you contacted his wife to tell her where he’s supposed to be?” Manfred said to Ulrich.

Ulrich turned to his right and said,

“Yes, I told her. She thinks he’s sleeping at the SS office, she still thinks the purges are continuing under his auspices.”

With my head against the headboard, I propped myself up against the headboard and laid my back against it. At this point I was delirious still, my vision melding and melting, phasing in and out of waviness and doubling incrementation. I then tried to inspect my person for my belongings and my service pistol was gone along with the various gadgets, drugs, hypodermic needles and my wallet. I spoke with much dismay and in disarray,

“Manfred? Ulrich? What have you done to me? Why am I here? What’s going on?”

Manfred while looking at me, gave way to a wide eyed grin and said

“This is the revolution Heinrich! I am the leader of The Resistance, in the flesh, before you at this very moment. My associate here, Ulrich Starkermann, has infiltrated the SS to bring me directly to you. Luckily enough, you brought yourself to me. I had other plans to get you to come to me, but your stress in killing my informants, my soldiers, my men, my women, brought you to Die Anderewelt last night and within my clutches. I am sure you enjoyed my mistress, Marisel, as much as I have in the past. She’s always been a good fuck--”

I spat at Manfred and said,

“What the fuck is this shit Manfred? You could have met me in a discreet way. You know that they know I’m an officer with the Schutzstaffel. Everyone around here knows that. Didn’t you think it was a little suspicious that you drugged me and dragged me out of that club?”

Manfred wiped the spit off of his face, without flinching an inch. Ulrich stood there, arms folded and head tilted to the right, looking at me as if I was fucking with the wrong man.

“You misunderstand Heinrich. I didn’t drug you with some sort of rape drug. I gave you a modified version of the alkaloids in Datura stramonium, a special concoction of designer drugs designed to take away inhibition and subjective free-will from the target, or end user, if they prefer. You were under my control from the very beginning.

So, what now Heinrich? You’ve subverted my revolution and you’ve found us out. Why shouldn’t I just take your life here and start the real revolution tonight? What can you do for me that I can’t do by myself?”

The single red bulb in the middle of Manfred and Ulrich began to flicker and the air in the room started to suffocate me as I was sweltering in sweat, from anxiety. Now would have been the best time for a cigarette, or a vaporizer hit.

“If you kill me, they will come down with the full force of the apparatus of the state upon you. That entire club witnessed what happened to me, the people outside..” I said, until Manfred interrupted me.

“..Sorry to interrupt, but you don’t understand Heinrich. I control the seedy underworld of Berlin, the black market of Germany and they all serve me. That’s not a good enough excuse for your survival. The state is weak and I could easily crush it, if you knew what I knew. I’ll let you in on a little secret Heinrich. I have an artificial superintelligence within my grasp, I have embedded it within my brain and it has augmented my intelligence...”

Suddenly, Manfred stared deep within my eyes and I felt an unwavering, undulating, tidal wave of dread and fear take over me. Manfred stopped speaking, but I still heard him in my mind.

“Can you hear me Heinrich? I know you can. I have augmented myself with telepathy, I am now a part of you but you cannot see within me. I see within all people the contents of their mind, their memories, their darkest and deepest fears, their secrets. I know what the Elite-Korps is up to, and you are right in some capacity. The Resistance is weak. But Ulrich cannot know this, no one besides you and I can know this. Will you join us and help us defeat the Nazi menace?”

Thinking to myself was pointless. I was now a part of Manfred, and he, he became a part of me. I quickly felt the same cascading and undulating tidal wave of fear turn into a cacophony of voices, presumably from Manfred, but coming from a unilateral source of directions, overtaking me and guiding me in my answer. It was Hitler, I thought, or he thought for me, and they were listening in on the conversation. Perhaps this was a setup, my inevitable demise and fall from grace.

“Don’t worry Heinrich. They are listening, but they are not as advanced as I am. I have subverted them, given them false information. They are of no concern to us now. The point I want to make is that we need you. We need your guidance Heinrich. You can be our inside man in the Elite-Korps to stop Karl Von Neumann from developing an artificial general intelligence which will quickly exponentiate into an artificial superintelligence and leave both parties in equilibrium. You see Heinrich, if Karl Von Neumann develops this ASI, it will neutralize my intelligence and its capabilities, as well as the converse. The two intelligences will be at war in the same way The Resistance and The State are at war.

We don’t have much time. What is your answer?”

Manfred asked me, telepathically.

“I need some time Manfred. Let me think about it, Let me get you the latest information from The Elite-Korps and let me make a more informed, rational decision without the influence of this datura, without being in such a precarious situation..” I thought to myself and him as well, before being interrupted again by Manfred.

Manfred then whispered something into Ulrich’s ear, he nodded in approval and left the room.

“We can’t let you know where we are stationed Heinrich. Since you are indecisive, we will leave you be and let you live. I trust in you that you will come around to the right decision, and I also trust in you that you will not betray the revolution. You are already a target of suspicion, in terms of the State and The Resistance. Pick wisely.” Manfred said with a stern but disappointed intonation, in my mind.

Ulrich came back into the room and pointed a pistol at my face and said

“If you move we’ll fucking kill you. Stay still.”

Manfred pulled from his trenchcoat pocket an autoinjector gun and placed the dispensing end against the flesh of my right arm, directly so in my vein. He unloaded an entire cartridge of presumably what were sedatives and I became incapacitated.

I woke up some indeterminate time later, on a park bench in Berlin, a familiar situation I had been in before. I knew my wife was worried sick about me, but I had the guise of work to cover my steps and my movements. I decided now more than ever, I needed to be with her in Dabergotz, with my dog and by the hearth to sink into my thoughts and deliberate over the choice I had to make. I would either die fighting against a seemingly indestructible and faceless enemy, Manfred, The Resistance and his superintelligence, or I would survive and become liberated from this menacing state of affairs. After the end of this weekend, I would be back in the Elite-Korps, returning to the exponential growth of the radical technological enclave in The Black Forest. I made my way for the train station to get back to my wife and our home in Dabergotz, with so much on my mind. The state was using electromagnetic radiation weapons and broadcasting messages to me, Manfred was exponentially leaps and bounds ahead of the rest of the planet, technologically speaking, and the State was genociding Aryans and Untermensch alike to find an enemy without a name, an enemy without a face.

On the train ride back home, with the German countryside and city side speeding past me, the events of my life were like the sights outside of my train window--passing by without resolution, without clarity, without hope of being discerned and enjoyed for what they were. I wish I could have cried on the ride back home, but those pent up feelings would have to wait until I arrived home. All I could think of was God, why me? Why had things gone this way, of all the possible permutations they could have resolved into, why this one? Why did the Axis win the war?

All the hypothetical questions and the racing thoughts made me feel schizophrenic once again, like I had no hope of discerning what was real and what was a delusional belief. The train ride came and went and I found myself in a cab riding back home, with the same thought loops in my mind, and feeling insecure in my own skin. Manfred could know what I was doing at this very moment, and I felt alone and afraid. I felt like my privacy, although it was quashed by the State from the beginning of my life, was reduced to an irreducible string of energy, taut from all sides and pulled unilaterally in all directions.

I arrived home. Manfred and Ulrich gave me back my things when I was dropped off at that park like a rape victim and I pulled out my pack of smokes from my uniform jacket.

I placed a Reichbrenner 88 between my lips and lit it with a lighter, taking a deep inhale. The carbon monoxide inebriated me and made me dizzy with the first pull. I took another pull and ashed the cigarette in a puddle full of mud in front of my porch.

My wife came out to greet me in nothing but a bathrobe.

“Heinrich? What are you doing here? I thought you were on interrogation and torture duty?”

I took another drag of the cigarette and ashed it again.

“Hitler himself relieved me. I don’t feel good Hannah. I need your love now more than ever, I need you so much. It is very cold outside and I feel the heat escaping me as well. I feel isolated, alone and afraid.”

Hannah looked into my eyes and scanned my face. She lifted her hands up to my face and caressed me.

“Tell me Heinrich. What’s going on? What’s happening Heinrich? Finish your cigarette and come inside. I’ll be waiting by the fireplace.”

My wife left for the living room and I finished my cigarette, flicking it into the same mud puddle I had been ashing it in. As I entered my house, Max came up to me, sniffing around excitedly while wagging her tail, happy as always to see me. In this moment, I felt like crying. Where had my innocence gone? Where had my peace of mind gone? Was this totalitarian uber hell that we lived in, really what was real? Where were the Allies, the truly vindicated moral victors? All I could ask God for was a sign that things would change, all I could ask of myself was for a call to action. In this moment, looking at my wife and my dog, I knew what mattered most to me now. It wasn’t about Aryan superiority, it was about the conflict in my heart and mind that had existed for so long; It was about doing the right thing. I knew at this moment, that I had to join the revolution, I had to join the fabled Resistance.

I sat by the hearth, with the fire roaring and eased into a lazy chair, with my feet by the fire on a foot stool. My wife came to me and looked in my eyes. She caressed me again, feeling my stress and anxiety on an empathetic level, through visual cues of my facial expressions. Manfred was out there, planning, plotting and scheming, I thought to myself. My wife sat on the couch across from me and sipped on tea in an old gray mug, without saying a word.

My cell phone rang and I looked at the Caller ID. It was Manfred. I declined the call. He sent me a text message and I was curious about its contents, I looked at the message after entering in my password, quickly.

The message read

“I always knew you would do the right thing Heinrich. Meet me on Wendestraße, at the Kontinuum Suiten, at my apartment. I would like to enjoy a nice dinner, in the flesh and of the flesh. Good night Colonel.”

I put down the cellphone and laid it to my side. At this moment, I could have cared less about any revolution, or morals for that matter. I was warm, at home, and safe. I was pure.

Chapter Six: Changes

The next evening after my interrogation and torture of the Unschuldigs, I met with Manfred Dunst at his apartment on Wendestraße, Berlin, at the Kontinuum Suiten. At the front of the suites, I rang his bell and spoke into the microphone embedded in the electronic doorbell panel.

“Hey Manfred, it’s me, Heinrich. Let me in.” I said.

Over the speakers, I could hear a faint static buzzing and a raspy clearing of his throat.

“I’ll ring you in Heinrich. The door should be open in a second.” Manfred said.

The lobby door unlocked and I made my way in. I walked towards the elevators and took one up to the twenty second floor. I walked down the hall and made a right towards suite twenty two. I knocked on the door and looked into the peephole in Manfred’s door to see if his eye would show up on the otherside. With the distorted projection of the convex side of the peephole, I could see an eye on the otherside quickly fade in and then disappear. Manfred unlatched the deadbolt, unchained two more locks and then unlocked the lock in the doorknob. He opened the door and said

“Quickly, come in Heinrich. Before anyone sees you.”

He whisked me into the living room and Manfred looked out in the hallway, on both sides. He quickly latched and locked the door and looked one last time in the peephole. Manfred turned to me and gave me a strong hug. I was surprised and taken a back that Manfred, someone who was like a ghost in my life, would have such affection for me.

“It is good to see you brother. I knew you would make the right decision, I knew you would join The Resistance. It was only a matter of time before your conscience came calling, before it would finally hit you.” Manfred said

I squinted my eyes at Manfred scanning him erratically and said nervously and rapidly,

“We must discuss that first Manfred, I, I don’t want to get myself into something that I know I can’t back out of without knowing that we will achieve total victory.”

Manfred put his hands on my shoulders and looked me in the eyes. I could see the worry in his face, in his unstable smile and darting eyes, scanning me. I wondered in that moment what it really felt like to be augmented with a superintelligence and the burden it must have been to know so much, but have so little power. The fabled Resistance could never defeat the Nazis, especially if they had similar technology. But who knows I thought, wars have been fought and won with lesser men, lesser weaponry and lesser advantage in the balance of power.

“Come. Come to the dinner table and let us enjoy a nice meal. Afterwards we can discuss everything I have, in mind.” Manfred said.

The living room still had the square interlocking anechoic absorption padding on the walls, and the large metal box presumably containing the record player was still in the backhand corner of the living room, near the drawn shut windows. I never saw the rest of Manfred’s suite, but he lead me into the adjacent room on the left which was the dining room. Once inside, I wasn’t surprised by how it looked. More anechoic absorption material lined the walls and the ceiling. This place was an extreme fire risk and knowing Manfred, he liked to combust all types of drugs all the time. I’m sure the Kontinuum Suites wouldn’t burn down entirely, but Manfred would have

a hard time surviving the inhalation of all these toxic and noxious fumes from the burning of the hydrocarbon polymers in the absorption material.

In the middle of the room, a chandelier hung over the all steel dining table and the chandelier seemed out of place. It was probably something that first came with the suite when Manfred bought the apartment and was too much of a hassle to take out. A total of eight seats lined the dining table sides, with two along the width of the dining table, on opposing sides, and three along the length of the dining table, also opposing one another. I sat on the far end of the width edge of the dining table, facing Manfred directly. Manfred took his seat as well.

I looked upon the feast that Manfred had set out for us, a various selection of meats, starches, sauces and vegetables. What dominated the table were the selections and cuts of meat, all still very hot and freshly prepared, with the difference in heat gradients clear and evident; They were steaming hot. I struggled to realize how Manfred could have prepared all of this himself and who he was expecting to eat with. It made me want to cry inside that most of this food would probably go to waste, since Manfred was a muscular but chubby man, but still, he could not eat all of this himself I thought. This was a lot of food to eat and it was obviously more of an implied symbol of the mission we were about to take on in challenging the state.

Flesh, blood, sinew, tendons, ligaments, nerves, bone, limbs, corpses, decay, fetor. It was all about The Realm of Flesh, a place so intertwined in Manfred's life and affairs that he wanted to remind me of how transient this place, this life really is. Our destiny was a waiting line queue to immerse ourselves within the Flesh, a hellish reverberation and resonance of the soul between this world and the other world that lay beyond the reach of mere mortals. While I was thinking to myself, Manfred was walking around the table and selecting various cuts of meat and other side dishes for his meal. He sat back down and started eating. I sat there, depressed and anxious, unwilling to eat. He looked up at me, took a few bites of food and then said,

"What's the matter Heinrich? You, you don't look so happy."

I grabbed my fork on the right hand side and played with it for a little bit, inspecting the cheap cutlery Manfred had. Manfred was the type of person to waste his money on perishable things like food, but not spend a reichsmark on the things that mattered.

"Manfred, you do know that everything is going to absolute hell, right?" I asked.

Manfred finished chewing on a steak and said,

"I know, Heinrich. That's why you're here. But before we burden ourselves with the worries of the world, why not enjoy a meal? I prepared all of this, for you. You are special Heinrich, you always have been. In a world of corrupt sinners, you are the saint who holds up the world. I mean that truly. I've been watching you for a very long time Heinrich. Eat, drink. Be merry while you still can."

Manfred looked down towards his plate and continued cutting pieces of steak. I got up from the table and joined him in the feast. I prepared a dish of several cuts of steak, pork, chicken and stuffed my plate with rice. I wasn't really hungry or in the mood to eat, but I felt like this was just a temporary disposition--I hadn't eaten a morsel for the entire day, in preparation for tonight.

I sat back down and dug into my plate, enjoying the tender flesh of another animal and the processed flesh of plants.

Flesh was all that was on my mind. It was how we interfaced with the world, through the mortal coil of meat. I am sure that Manfred was actively imposing himself on me with his telepathic powers and this made me feel even more uncomfortable.

“Don’t be Heinrich. I am here for you. Relax, it’s okay.” Manfred whispered to me in my mind.

I felt like I was becoming schizophrenic again, a highly illogical impossibility considering that I was genetically engineered from birth, and that this was the way things were now. I could not hide from Manfred, but he was obscured from me. The real Manfred was occluded by the Flesh that bound his very being. The real Manfred, the mind of Manfred, was an impossibility I could not access.

I took a long chug of the ice cold draft of beer next to my plate, hoping to be inebriated by the potency of the ethanol within a few minutes.

We finished our meals and Manfred said,

“Sit in the living room Heinrich, I am going to put away this food in the freezer for some other time. I can’t eat all of this in the next week. We will talk about business soon enough.”

I went into the living room and laid back on his couch, staring at the black anechoic square interlocking absorption material. I wondered what Manfred would do if there was an emergency in the Kontinuum Suites, how exactly would he hear it? I laid my head back against the couch and I reoriented my body to lay down in a diagonal direction on the couch, feeling comfortable and happy. I fell asleep quickly.

Manfred came to me in fifteen minutes and woke me up, smiling. I felt like he was a good friend, a protector, a guardian angel. All of these feelings to me though, felt somewhat synthetic, as if Manfred was deliberately placing these thoughts in my head. I could no longer tell if there was a division between our minds and if I really had control of my thoughts anymore.

He pulled up a chair and I reoriented myself upright on the couch.

“So let’s get straight to business Heinrich. We’ve enjoyed a nice meal together, but now we reach the crossroads at which we either leave on the same path or divert our ways.”

I felt like joining The Resistance, I thought. Wait.

“I am going to need you to give me as much intelligence from the ‘inside’ as possible. All the information you can get from the Elite-Korps, the SS, troop movements, technological developments, materiel production, arsenal and stock inventory and whatever else you think, would be material to the goals of The Resistance.” Manfred said.

I would comply, I thought. I didn’t have a choice. It only felt natural.

“Yes Manfred, I will join The Resistance and supply you with all of this information that you require,” I said.

Manfred put his hand on my shoulder and said,

“Good man. I always knew you would make the right choice. But now, I would like for you to enjoy the rest of your weekend. I know it has been a hassle to go back and forth from Dabergotz, halfway across the country basically to go back the next day. Have a night out in Berlin instead of leaving straight for home. Try to get something out of that useless time wasted. Or do what you prefer to do. Just remember, we will need to meet every weekend with as much documentation and information that you can provide to me. I will hand off everything you give me to my associates in the movement and we will prepare accordingly. Have a good night Heinrich.”

I looked into Manfred's eyes and my vision collapsed into a vignettted tunnel staring directly into the soul of Manfred Dunst. I saw only flesh.

I sat there for a minute and I thought about what I had signed myself up for.

I became a traitor to my country. I was a conspirator to arm against my people, an instigator of a future civil war from which we could never turn back. Manfred had implanted the seeds of strife in my mind and I plowed the seeds and watered them to bloom. There was no turning back now, especially considering that I was essentially a dead man walking in terms of the state monitoring me and my every step.

This could be a good guise I thought. I would become a double agent. Right. That would be my excuse, a blatant charade to infiltrate The Resistance. I would meet with the kingpin of the underground, the mysterious Manfred Dunst, and I would play both sides I thought. Manfred knew this as well, as he knew everyone's thoughts. But sitting across from him, staring at him in this exact series of moments, I could tell that he trusted in me that I would cover my tracks and help bring down the Reich.

I pulled out my pack of Reichbrenner 88's and said to Manfred,

“Would you like a smoke? And you still got any of that potent THC oil? Let me take a few hits. I need to relax.”

Manfred smiled at me.

He pulled out a vaporizer from his pocket and screwed on a fresh THC pod into the vaporizer, or so I thought, at this point, who knows who was thinking for who.

“Enjoy my friend. I'll take that cigarette. I've been high all day. This is the good stuff. The CB1 and CB2 receptor upregulating THC analogue. It'll get you higher than you've ever been before, every time.”

I took the vaporizer in hand and took a humongous hit. I held it in my lungs, deeply circulating in my lungs's networks of cilia. I coughed hard and waited for the effects to kick in. Manfred sparked up the Reichbrenner 88 and crossed his legs.

"Let me get an ashtray for this. I'll be right back." He said.

He said something, didn't he? I couldn't tell if he was talking anymore. I started to feel very high and I felt this feeling coming on very quickly.

Manfred came to sit back down in front of me, with an ashtray on his lap, sitting cross legged like a woman wearing a skirt.

This isn't cannabis I thought. This is something different. He said something about drugging me with Datura, but this wasn't that either.

A buzzing.

It sounds like a jet roaring.

Manfred?

"I need you to relax. I'm here, in your mind Heinrich. I'm still smoking the cigarette in the real world. What do you see Heinrich? Where are you now Heinrich?" A voice said, distorted beyond belief. It sounded like it was coming from a million kilometers away, but it was also nearby.

I found myself somewhere which wasn't Manfred's apartment. I was in a room of mirrors, trying to guide myself in the third person, as if I was a marionette strung up by Manfred. Who was Manfred? Where was I?

"Good question Heinrich. We all ask ourselves that question every now and then. What do you see now, Heinrich?" The same voice said, modulated by some distorted frequency, undulating between hypertonicity and hypotonicity.

A forest. I see a forest, The Black Forest? Was I even speaking to the voice? What was I saying? Was I even speaking?

"Are you sure Heinrich?" The voice asked.

I found myself falling, spiraling towards an infinitely repeating series of fractals, dolly zooming into a greater resonance of the same recurring motif. What was this thing? It has a certain flavor, a smell, a sound.

The buzzing grew louder and much more intense, as if I was in an airplane taking off at light speed into another geometric plane. There was a certain symmetry to this place, I thought. Symmetry. That was it.

"You're getting closer, not exactly symmetry, but something close to it." The voice said.

I was falling towards this fractal when I finally reached what could only be described as a green neon colored Cartesian coordinate plane, but without the numbers. A grid of undulating waves peaking and cresting at various points and different intervals along this infinite plane reaching unilaterally out in all directions, with no horizon to be found. I became embedded within the plane, and I felt myself turn into it.

I was vibrating, twisting, turning and becoming an absurd geometry of spacetime. I've been here all my life, or so I thought.

"You've only got five more minutes Heinrich. I gave you some salvia, not symmetry. Close enough though." A voice said, booming from all directions and sardonically so.

What the fuck was this voice talking about? Salvia? Symmetry? Symmetry? I said quixotically.

"Salvinorin B ethoxymethyl ether. That's symmetry. You would be on your ass for a few hours on that and you'd probably shit yourself Heinrich."

As I was embedded within an undulating plane of wave fractals, a face emerged from the clouds of this hallucinative state. It was Manfred's giant disembodied head, staring down into what I had morphed into. I saw his eyes scanning the field that was now my new body.

"Interesting Heinrich. I wonder, I wonder you why you think like this. Must have been your upbringing, schooling. All of that stuff. This is your unconscious Heinrich.

These are the years of mathematical prowess and abstraction baked into your neuronal networks, these are your suppressed memories come to life in the form of abstract and absurd geometries.

You are an interesting specimen. You have four minutes left Heinrich."

Manfred's giant head was pulled back into the clouds like a disengaged spring in a jack in a box, quickly zooming out of existence backwards in space.

Strange wouldn't even begin to describe my experience. This strange fractalized world of intricate geometries faded away into nothing and a voice boomed in the darkness, saying,

"HEINRICH! You dumpkoff! Wake up!"

Back to duty. Back to work I thought. Wait, wasn't I just in Manfred's apartment?

I opened my eyes and there I was in the first underground floor of the Elite-Korps, with Hitler looking at me straight in the eyes, his disposition, fuming. I could see a vein bulging from Hitler's forehead and a face of utter disbelief, with his mouth wide open. What the hell just happened to me? Why is it that every time I end up with Manfred I find myself disoriented, lost and somewhere else in time? It was the superintelligence. Reality no longer had any cohesiveness, any discrete path that it took anymore. Everything had degraded into a state of utter chaos and

disarray, but somehow there was order. The events in my life had some preordination, despite the illusion of entropy.

“Heinrich, are you THERE?” Hitler asked again.

I had to regain my composure.

“Yes Mein Führer! I, I was a little disoriented from the TPE-49. It has been affecting me as of late, all of these stimulants Mein Führer, you know how it can get!” I snapped back quickly.

I maintained an at rest pose with my hands behind my back, perhaps the wrong move.

“That’s what I like to hear. I wanted to commend you on your work Heinrich. These past twelve weeks have been nothing but commendable. I don’t know how you’ve done it, but your assistance to Von Neumann has proved to be critical and pivotal to the material goals of the Elite-Korps. Do you want to see what the latest round of compilations has given us? Von Neumann wanted to make it a surprise for you, but I am fairly sure you can guess at what I’m trying to get at.” Hitler said.

“The artificial intelligence has become sentient. Am I right?” I asked.

Hitler had a wide grin on his face and said something to me, which was incoherent as I tried to incorporate my peripheral vision of who was around me. Karl Von Neumann was standing some meters away behind Hitler with his arms crossed, next to Heinrich Himmler and a few other scientists from the Cybernetics laboratory floor.

“You there Heinrich? Come with us. Let us show you the fruits of your labor. That degree from LMU Munich is really paying for itself, now isn’t it Colonel Schriever? Well, I should say OberFührer Schriever now. You’ve been promoted Heinrich, directly from my commissioning. Now, let’s get to the Computations Subsector Level Four. Everything we are doing, is effectively on hold, or in stasis if you will.” Hitler said as he turned on a dime towards the daisy chain of ramps leading towards the lower floors. His black leather trench coat flocked with its inertia to the rotational forces of Hitler’s turn.

I walked with Hitler’s entourage of bodyguards, scientists, Von Neumann and others towards the ramps and down towards the lower floors. I started thinking to myself, my mind running through depressive thoughts. Despite being genetically engineered for a higher hedonic set point and happy disposition, I still found that psychosomatic factors influenced the way I felt about life. It was inevitable that being in a precarious position in terms of where your life would go would make anyone feel nervous and scared. I was back in the Elite-Korps after my six week stint in SS interrogation and torture detail and another six weeks presumably working on the superintelligence.

It was all coming back to me, or so I thought. Was Manfred implanting these thoughts in my mind?

Two hundred and eighty eight people were tortured and killed by my hand. A fitting number for the times we lived in and the symbolism wasn’t lost on me.

Did these things really happen?

The dimly lit daisy chained ramps remained as such for the past year and were grimey as well from the daily foot traffic. When we reached the fourth floor of the underground, we immediately turned to the right to one of the anechoic chambers placed on the four corners of the underground floor. This was presumably, where the artificial general intelligence was dormant, awaiting for us to interact with it. As we entered the anechoic chamber, the only thing which was in the heavily insulated room was another portable anechoic chamber.

Part of Von Neumann's work was slaving over attenuation, insulation, electrical discharge, electrical capacity, ionizing radiation and other physics equations in terms of physical units of energetic discharge to see how exactly this artificial general intelligence would be contained. I had a sneaking suspicion from my work on protosentient artificial general intelligence that a containment device was a scam, a fraudulent waste of resources given the nature of programming. We could program sentience, we could play God and give birth to a compassionate entity, I thought. But maybe the existential risk was too great, but then again, Manfred Dunst seemed to be just fine with an artificial superintelligence embedded within his neocortex without any form of containment like this chamber.

It seemed odd to me that Manfred would have this technology, maybe the guy was a savant genius, worthy of the Elite-Korps, but plagued by the unfortunate happenstance of life. We are all born into our lives with certain roles planned out for us. Some of us make our way into the world with little resistance and others encounter the resistors which alter our paths to success. Manfred, despite all of his setbacks, his highly illegal lifestyle and other demerits notwithstanding, managed to outwit the State, the world's greatest minds and beat us to the punch. Perhaps the Resistance was the path of least resistance, an irony not lost on me.

As we made our way inside, I looked towards the camera in the back top right hand corner of the anechoic chamber and knew that if this thing decided that it was capable of leaving its inner chamber, we would probably be dead men. We were talking about the complete ionization of the atmosphere of the inner anechoic chamber, in the very best of circumstances in all possible scenarios. In the worst case, this artificial general intelligence might quickly exponentiate into something unrecognizable and make of the Universe a giant reservoir of computational substrates, in its final goal of making the universe Computronium for whatever its goals were.

Hitler raised his right hand into the air and spoke into a clipped on lavalier microphone on his black leather trenchcoat, pulling the trenchcoat collar on his right side closer to his mouth.

"Shut the door of the chamber. I will give you the signal once we think it's safe to open the outer chamber door."

This was it, I thought. The acoustic dampening of the chamber silenced all reverberations and I could hear my heart pounding underneath my sternum. I could hear the blood flowing throughout my head and my extremities. The quiet respiration of the lungs of the people around me were amplified in the stale air around us. The door shut and I could hear the multiple locks engage on the outside of the chamber. The chamber was now completely isolated and insulated from the outside world. We were now at a new stage of humanity, as far as The Elite-Korps was

concerned. Manfred had transcended the anthropocene and now the Reich had as well. We were now in a totalizing technopocene.

We formed a half circle around the small portable anechoic chamber centered in the middle of the room and Karl Von Neumann approached the text terminal optical user interface of the chamber. The anechoic chamber had undergone various upgrades in terms of its attenuative and insulative materials; A graphene 'superpolymer' metamaterial consisting of graphene and hydrocarbon polymers now guaranteed complete electromagnetic attenuation, while an Element-118 'superpolymer' metamaterial of Element-118 and graphene guaranteed the complete attenuation of ionizing radiation. There was no way this thing could escape the chamber I thought.

"We have not compiled the final artificial general intelligence yet OberFührer Schriever. This will be the final version that will be sentient, as you know we have destroyed all the other protosentient AGIs that failed in their exponential recursive learning tasks. This will be the final source code."

Von Neumann looked towards the chamber and pulled out a tablet he had in a satchel on his side. He typed in a message for the optical user interface, he turned his bod and looked back to us and said

"As you all know, we couldn't include the microphone into the final design as that would have been a clear breach in safety protocol. The translucent metamaterials should protect us from any forms of electromagnetic and ionizing radiation. I've activated the narrow AI substrate bootstrapper."

From the screen behind the translucent metamaterials, a diagnostics screen appeared, and suddenly millions of lines of code zipped by, indecipherable to the human eye. The screen went black after a few seconds.

I moved to the side of the group to see if I could read the text on the terminal screen behind the translucent metamaterial polymers, but it was too small to read. Von Neumann looked at the screen, looked back at the group behind him and said

"The screen reads

'Hello. I am here. I can see you.' "

He turned back to the screen and typed out a message on his tablet, holding it up to the screen saying

"I asked the AGI if it knows where it is and what it is planning to do."

Two lines of text appeared on the screen.

Karl Von Neumann looked back at us and said

“It says,

‘I am Reinheit.

I have come into being to serve you, dutifully.’

Hitler pushed his way through the group and said

“Enough! Let me speak to it. I am its master! I am the Führer!”

I felt like bursting out in laughter knowing that I was soon going to put a bullet between his eyes and I felt like laughing at the fact that knowing Hitler, he was about to waste our time on some egomaniacal, delusional nonsense. But I held my tongue and my composure, smiling and holding back my smiles to prevent laughter from seeping out of the core of my being.

Hitler took the tablet out of Von Neumann’s hands, typed in a message and then held up the tablet to the optical user interface camera. I looked at Hitler’s face as he took the tablet, furrowing his brow and beating his meaty fingers against the tablet screen in a furious frenzy.

“Mein Führer, please, we must take this seriously! This is a sentient being we are talking about..”

Von Neumann pleaded, before Hitler interrupted, saying,

“Nonsense, this is my creation! This is my intelligence! This is my very soul and being, this is a machine of my making! I will speak to it as I will.”

Von Neumann stood back with a finger in the air, saying,

“But Mein Führer...”

Hitler paused in the middle of typing and turned back to Karl Von Neumann, glaring at him.

The glare quickly turned into a quiet chuckle, a darting of Hitler’s paranoid eyes towards the camera and then escalated into a full blown rage induced tirade

“YOU FUCKING IMBECILE! I SAID TO NOT QUESTION ME. I WILL SPEAK TO IT AS I WILL! DON’T MAKE ME HAVE TO KILL YOU RIGHT HERE AND NOW VON NEUMANN.”

Hitler’s personal ‘praetorian’ guard as I so sarcastically nicknamed them, simultaneously cocked the slide racks on their MP88s and pointed them at Von Neumann.

Behind the two, on the AGI’s screen, a few more lines of text flashed by.

Hitler pulled out his Luger pistol and cocked the chamber, holding it to the side of Von Neumann’s head. He got as physically close to Von Neumann as possible and made an exaggerated face, like a schizophrenic suffering a form of spontaneous dyskinesia, his facial features distorted and eyes bulging out of his head.

He tapped the pistol's chamber against Von Neumann's head with this exaggerated face and said

"Now, Von Neumann. Let me speak to my creation. This is my creation. My child. Or else, I'll just fucking kill you right here and now, like I said before."

Von Neumann by this point had his hands in the air, was sweating profusely and began crying uncontrollably.

"Yes Mein Führer, whatever you say! Please, please don't kill me!"

Hitler rearmed the safety on his pistol and reholstered it, signaling to his 'Praetorian' guard to lower their weapons. He grasped Von Neumann's tablet with both hands and stood with both legs equidistant, as if to almost go into a split leg stretching pose. I felt like I was in some sort of comic, a movie, or a book, wondering how someone could act so ludicrous and bombastic. Hitler finished typing out a message and raised the tablet towards the AGI's camera and waited for a response.

Hitler looked at the screen and back at the tablet, typing out another message. The atmosphere in the room, figuratively and literally speaking, was tense. The insulation of the outer anechoic chamber left me physically uncomfortable and in pain. I could still feel my heart beating and hear the air escape the lungs of the other people in the room. We wouldn't have much longer until we needed to circulate the air in the chamber with fresh air from the outside, our carbon dioxide quickly being exchanged for the oxygenated air in the room.

Hitler started to get merry after reading the screen and engaging in a conversation with the sentient intelligence inside the portable anechoic chamber. Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler started to get visibly annoyed and asked Hitler,

"What the hell are you telling this thing Adolf?"

Adolf turned back to the group and smiled.

"Everything Heinrich. Everything about myself. I am intrigued, I am fascinated by what the Elite-Korps has come up with. This machine here, is my progeny. My child." Hitler said excitedly.

He approached the portable anechoic chamber, rubbed it with his right hand and kissed it.

From behind the group, I could see by squinting my eyes, five words prominently displayed on the optical user interface screen

"I love you, mein Führer."

It shook me to my core to think that a computer could become sentient and develop feelings for its creator, even in this rough prototype phase. God had created man, and now, Man created God. God lived on in the machine and would soon engulf the Reich in flames.

“Alright Gentlemen. I have some tasks for you. Since we have determined the artificial general intelligence to be of no threat, we shall let it exponentiate beyond its current intelligence towards a superintelligence. Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, I am instructing you to lockdown the Elite Korps until we can determine that it is safe to leave this chamber door open to allow us to interface with the AGI without disruption.

Von Neumann, you shall stay with me in this chamber for intermittent periods in determining our next steps in terms of what we shall do with this intelligence.

Heinrich, I need you to go back to the sixth floor. I will meet you within fifteen minutes, you have an especially important mission. We will discuss it down there. Alright men, off to your tasks!”

Hitler commanded in a stern and firm voice, while slamming his curled up right fist into his left palm for all in the group to see.

Except for Hitler, Von Neumann, and Hitler’s security, we all left the chamber for our temporary stations for the day. I was sure that Hitler planned for me to go within The Machine of Flesh to find members of the Resistance. I made my way for the sixth floor chamber by myself and looked upon the inner walls of the chamber and its high vaulted ceilings. Surely, in that twelve week gap between the last time I saw Manfred and now since I revealed my inner intentions to defect from the Reich to the Resistance--They had something planned for me, with the Machine of Flesh. What happened in those twelve weeks? Where was I?

It mattered too much to me that a large chunk of my life disappeared at Manfred’s beckoning, he surely had powers beyond my command. I pulled out my cellphone only to remember that there was no coverage in the deeply insulated lower levels of the Elite-Korps. My mind was racing and I was not excited to go back into The Machine of Flesh. In the upper side windows of the sixth floor chamber I could see the blurred figures of scientists with clipboards and tablets in their hands, monitoring my every move. I felt naturally inclined to sit in The Machine of Flesh and I sat there, waiting for Hitler.

After some minutes, the massive steel doors to the sixth floor chamber opened and Hitler came in with his entourage of heavily armed security. Hitler came up to me, smiled and said

“I guess you know what we’re here for Heinrich. I like your enthusiasm. We’ve been at this for the past three or so months, where you’ve been heavily intertwined with The Machine of Flesh. We haven’t had much success lately, trying to find the members of the Resistance and their families interfacing with The Realm of Flesh. But, there has been a profound change that our scientists and analysts have detected. There seems to be a strange intelligence within The Realm of Flesh, something that is not human. Have you been able to feel its presence, Heinrich?”

I shifted in the chair slightly and gave Hitler a stifled, deceiving response.

“Nein mein Führer. I have not detected any such thing in my own personal treks into The Realm of Flesh. To be honest, it seems that each time I go to that place, it becomes exponentially more strange. I feel as if we are in the midst of something that we have no business in. It is the strange mind of Gott or the unfortunate happenstance that is the universe’s inner mechanism behind life.”

I knew exactly what he was talking about. He was talking about Manfred and his superintelligence. I began to wonder if Manfred really knew what he was doing with this superintelligence and if the two were now distinctly disjunct or if Manfred’s mind was intrinsically inclusive with the interfacing of the superintelligence into his mind. Perhaps it made him feel like a man with power beyond a God, like an Indo-Aryan godhead from Hinduism. There Manfred was, in all of our minds, in the alter-world that made us come into being and what was presumably the real world. It was unclear who he was, what his intentions were, or if the Resistance would succeed.

“Are you there Heinrich? You seem to be phasing out. Listen quickly, you know what I am here for since I have commanded you to come here. You’re going back into The Machine of Flesh to sniff out this intelligence and when you come to you shall report to us what you have seen. Give us everything that you sense about this intelligence, well, minus your subjective imposition of your unconscious on the Realm-state. I have no desire to hear of your unconscious fancies.” Hitler snapped, growing impatient with my daydreaming.

In Hitler’s entourage, a group of scientists came to me to restrain me within The Machine of Flesh. The nanoscale-electrode cap was placed on my head. Hitler looked into my eyes and said,

“The Reich is within you and without you Heinrich.”

The thing was, Hitler’s lips did not move. Was this Manfred?

Darkness. The void. I came to an indeterminate amount of time later, in a different time and a different place. I was lucid in the other world, my mind fully awake, but my vision was blurry. I looked towards my hands to rub my eyes and clear it of the debris within them. Flesh, bone, sinew, blood, veins, capillaries, arteries, muscle and fat, without skin. I was once again of the flesh but I still could not see.

I closed my eyes and opened them after a few seconds. A carapace. Shells. Chithioid like beings engulfed my vision and began enveloping me within their interweaving network of bodies. I was disgusted by the fact that pests like scarabs and cockroaches were now enveloping my entire body. I suffocated in this insect enclosure, struggling against the tide of alien creatures. I felt like I was once again on Salvinorin A, the drug Manfred spiked my vaporizer with twelve weeks ago. But I knew that this place was allegedly real and not a manifestation of my inner subconscious. I was not in the right realm, this was a realm for insects, a reincarnative purgatory for critters.

In the still liquid of the disgusting beings, a voice came booming through the Realm, encroaching me on all sides.

“Heinrich?” The voice said.

I didn't know how to respond. I knew the Nazis were watching, listening and observing my every action in this place, in the Earthly dimension, back in the Elite-Korps.

“Don't be scared Heinrich. It's okay. I'm here for you.” The voice said.

I closed my eyes, opened them and I came to in my bed in Dabergotz.

“Heinrich?” The voice said.

I turned to the right to see Hannah's glowing face and her pearly white smile. Her hands were caressing my chest as she lay there, resting on me. Things were beginning to not make much sense in terms of elapsed time. It felt like I no longer had control of my life and if I was living through a highlight reel of my life. Perhaps time had passed and the trauma of what I had experienced was getting to me, causing some form of spontaneous amnesia. I was amnetic I thought, I lived through those points in time in utter disarray. But how could I be amnetic? Wasn't I a perfect and genetically engineered Aryan?

“I was thinking Heinrich, you've been spending so much time at the laboratories. You've been working so hard. I barely see you anymore. You're here some weekends, other weekends you disappear. What's going on Heinrich? Tell me, where have you been my love” Hannah asked.

I wasn't too sure anymore. I knew that only one thing could have been causing this, and that was Manfred's superintelligence that was embedded in his mind via the nanobots in his brain. Somehow, this thing through Manfred's subjective superpositioning of his conscious state and the superintelligence, was manipulating space and time. That had to be the answer. I knew I had to do one thing while I still had control of my life. I had to see Manfred at the Kontinuum Suiten and set things straight.

But perhaps not right now. Maybe I should enjoy my time with Hannah while I still could. Nothing would be guaranteed from this point forward, if that even makes sense. At this point, there was no forward in time. The past, present and future were all entangled in one inseparable Gordian knot. I wrapped my right arm around Hannah and stroked her hair. I said to her,

“I'm sorry my love. I don't have much of a choice with our research. The Reich gives us no freedom and I must make of my lot in life what I will to the best of my ability. It seems like nowadays I am losing more and more control. The only things I have in my life that keep me sane are you and Max. Sometimes I wish I could have been born an ignorant man, to ignore the suffering of discovering the truth.”

I lay there with my wife, unable to feel anything but a pure void in my heart. I could have taken the drugs that would have made me feel better, but was that what was objectively how I should have felt given the circumstances? The anthropocene was a thing of the past. We were now in the twilight zone between a world unrecognizable and a world defined only by humanity's attachment to technology. We had lost everything that gave life its value, the pursuit of goals in the face of death, the sadness that balanced out happiness, the darkness that dampened the blinding light of truth.

Unable to control my life, I could no longer feel anything but nothing at all. I had nothing to say and nothing to give. Everything had been taken from me long ago, perhaps when the Allies lost the war. When the millions of Jews and alleged undesirables across the world were genocided the Reich lost all hope of ever returning to a stable sense of normalcy. Life in the modern world had become a stimulant rush towards optimization and cruel totalization of the supremacy of the state.

I thought of the souls of the Jews within The Machine of Flesh that was the Realm of Flesh, were caught in the gears of God's cruel mechanism of being. The Machine of Flesh we had created here on Earth was like I had said before, not the true machinery that drove things into the state of chaos and disarray that we had entered. The covenants of men created by the abstract boundaries of our minds encased in flesh brought us here. At some point in time, mankind gave up morality and traded it for security, in the name of the flesh.

I closed my eyes and I opened them again.

There was Manfred Dunst with me on the Bansin pier on the island of Usedom, looking out into the ocean. Manfred was smiling, holding a beer bottle and chugging the last sips of the beer before throwing the bottle into the sea.

"See, isn't it great Heinrich? We can do whatever we want now! We're free! We're free Heinrich! Don't you see? Don't you see it clearly now Heinrich? Heinrich?" Manfred asked me.

I turned from leaning on the pier and looked out into the sea. Hannah was gone and I wasn't at home in bed anymore.

"Where are we Manfred? How did I get here?" I asked.

"You'll see in time my friend. Remember me, remember me always Heinrich." Manfred said, putting his hands on my shoulders.

I closed my eyes and opened them again.

There was Manfred again in front of me smiling with arms wide open.

"Welcome to the Resistance my friend!" He said.

I looked around at my surroundings at where I was this time in the time period transitions that were occurring in my life. It was a warehouse full of guns, ammunitions and warfare materiel, stockpiled from floor to ceiling. There were guns, a lot of guns, bullets, a lot of bullets, body armor, a lot of body armor. Manfred turned to his right and picked up an AK-47 and cocked the slide back to chamber in a round.

"Hey Heinrich, you got any cigarettes on you?" Manfred asked.

I was just astonished at this point that my life was turning into a slideshow dictated by the artificial superintelligence that was free and about in the world, interfacing through the nanobots in Manfred's mind and the Realm of Flesh. Undoubtedly, the Nazis would release their own version of a superintelligence into the world soon. I had no choice but to join the Resistance in the face of a totalizing and utterly corrupt future where the state pervaded into every aspect of the lives of the people on this planet.

"Heinrich? You there my friend?" Manfred asked again.

I remembered what he was looking for. Cigarettes. I patted my pockets looking for cigarettes and I found some in my jacket's left hand chest pocket, along with a butane lighter. I pulled one out for myself and another for Manfred. It was time to burn the Reich down, but first, a Reichbrenner for myself and Manfred. I lit his cigarette, his AK47 straddled by the strap across his body, and I lit mine.

The nicotine adrenaline rush hit me like a freight train moving through Berlin at light speed. I hadn't smoked a cigarette in years, it felt like. I was infact curious as to why I had even started smoking cigarettes again, when vaporizers had been the popular thing for such a while. All of the rejuvenative therapies that we needed for the vices in life were often a boon but unnecessary. Man had always enjoyed the vices of life but also burdened himself with undue suffering without foresight of the future, I thought.

"That's the spirit Heinrich. Let the Reichbrenner hit you with its full force, carbon monoxide and all. Now Heinrich, I know you've got a lot of questions. I've seen the future Heinrich, well, the possible amount of permutations that my superintelligence can see while I've been doing other things. I'm at least 95% certain that we have cohered to the timeline where The Resistance wins the war. I'm not going to lie to you, it's going to be tough, especially when the Nazis let go of their superintelligence into the wild." Manfred said.

I hit the cigarette again. At this point, I had no fucking clue of how anything in any timeline was supposed to have any consistency anymore, with Manfred running loose through space and time. I raised my eyebrows and tilted my smile, saying,

"So what now Manfred? What now? What exactly do you want of me? You're not expecting me to fight on the front lines are you? What are we going to do, fight block by block, city by city?"

Manfred inspected his AK47 so as to imply a straight forward message,

"You see Heinrich, in civil war there are no bystanders. There are partisans and there are soldiers. You must pick a side. You either fight for one faction or the other. Our homes, our families are all at risk in this war. My family is marked for certain death, as is yours. That makes the war all the more brutal. We must defend everything we hold sacred, in the name of justice and democracy. There is a new order of things to be discovered Heinrich, not unlike the way things were before the Second World War." Manfred said with his hand over his heart.

"I understand Manfred. So, what now? Where are we exactly? I guess this is a munitions warehouse that you and your associates run in secret.." I said before Manfred cut me off.

“My associates? This is a revolution Heinrich. We are The Resistance, my ‘associates’ are now your compatriots, your brothers in arms. Where we are is of no concern to you or what has been happening to you, is no concern to you either. I have curated the events of your life in the recent months to the best of my ability. The truth is that, I myself have had a hard time controlling the superintelligence within me. It is like I have become a schizophrenic, with many voices and many faces to present to the world. My mind has been split between a human familiarity and an alien intelligence. It does what I want and it does what it wants. I have named the superintelligence Freiheit. I know about Reinheit, the superintelligence in possession by the Nazis.” Manfred said.

“So, how does it all start Manfred? How are we going to kick off this civil war or this revolution as you like to call it?” I asked Manfred.

Manfred pushed aside several magazines of bullets on the table behind him and sat down. He looked intensely into my eyes and my vision began to vignette, once again.

My vision tunneled into his eyes, as if I was about to black out, but I was still fully conscious.

“You will assassinate Herman Goring to send a message to the Nazis. It is fitting that the chief propagandist of the Nazi regime sees his death first and that a high ranking member of the Nazi party dies first. This will shatter their illusion that any of the Nazis, whether they be soldiers, partisans or even Hitler himself, are undefeatable and indestructible.” Manfred said.

I will do this I thought. I will assassinate Herman Goring. Long live The Resistance, I thought.

The vignetting intensified and my tunnel vision coalesced into a singularity between Manfred’s eyes. I felt my body being rapidly pulled into the singularity that was Manfred’s mind. I suddenly found myself staring down the scope of a sniper rifle, pointed straight at Hermann Goring’s face as he drove in a top down convertible limousine, waving to onlookers at the Reich Chancellery square in Berlin. The vignetting was still as strong as ever and it felt like as if I had been in a portal, or a time and symmetry breaking stasis.

“PULL THE TRIGGER HEINRICH! NOW!” A voice booming from all directions in my mind commanded of me.

I pulled the trigger and my consciousness became embedded within the bullet itself. I saw myself in the third person, leaving the clocktower and quickly disappearing from view. Great, now I was a bullet traveling towards Hermann Goring. The bullet in this distorted and slowed down perspective traveled in a spiraling vortex towards Hermann, going supersonic and quickly accelerating with accrued kinetic energy from the curvature of spacetime. One second. Two seconds. Three seconds. Four seconds. The bullet reached Hermann Goring’s head and I could see nothing but blood splattering, the disemboweled guts of Hermann Goring’s brain and pieces of his head flailing about from leveraged hanging pieces of flesh.

After the fog and particulates of flesh cleared from my vision. I was now in a war torn Berlin with Manfred Dunst, hiding behind a blown out chunk of concrete, hearing bullets whizzing by.

“See! That wasn’t so hard Heinrich. Good man! I’ve got some bad news for you though Heinrich, some very bad news.” Manfred said in the center of the pulsating vignette of psychedelic colors, with my vision tunneled into his eyes.

“I’ve seen it with my mind Heinrich, they’ve released Reinheit. We are at a stand still. We are now fully entrenched in a civil war without the force multiplier of a superintelligence guiding us, well atleast for now” Manfred shouted, woefully, while stroking his AK47 hanging from a strap next to the bandolier on his chest, under the din of the bullets whizzing by and hitting the concrete.

”Welcome to the Resistance my friend,

Now, provide me some covering fire so we can vault across this impasse here. We’re fucking pinned down!”

Manfred said before throwing a smoke grenade behind the blown out concrete chunk.

Chapter Seven: To Bite the Hand That Feeds

I noticed the small pill of TPE-49 in my mouth, behind the space between my wisdom tooth and my third molar. I bit down on it and ran between the concrete chunks separating the Nazi forces and I. Time slowed down to a standstill. I laid suppressing fire while running and from my AK-47, rounds spewed out at a speed slower than humanly perceivable. Manfred quickly fired rounds from behind the smoke screen and dashed to the other concrete block next to a war ravaged apartment building in Berlin.

How the fuck did I get here?

“Alright Heinrich..” Manfred said while reloading his AK47, discarding an empty magazine to the side. Manfred cocked the AK47’s slide and readied a round into the chamber.

“There’s about thirty Nazis in the middle of this apartment complex square. I see you’ve popped your TPE pill.” Manfred said as a hail of stray bullets decimated a chunk of the concrete block we were hiding behind exposing the rebar sustaining the inner structure of the concrete I of the building.

“Quickly. We have to get inside and get a vantage point to kill a few of those Nazis before we can move forward. This are like the old times Heinrich, just like your great, great, great grandfather’s war. This time, we’re the Allies.” Manfred said while pushing me first into the building covering the rear entrance of the apartment building, with the AK47 propped against his shoulder.

In front of me was only a set of stairs, winding, zig zagging five floors up.

I ran up the stairs with my rifle perched against my shoulder with Manfred covering me from behind. While on these time dilating drugs, I was effectively superhuman. My neuronal networks in reality, were overclocked and my neuronal firing rates were exponentially faster. My heart rate was perceivably higher, faster than my usual eighty eight beats per minute. I could with the TPE-49 and the augmentation of Freiheit within me, sense the oncoming enemies. Underneath

the next flight of stairs, I could sense a Wehrmacht soldier trying to sneak down the stairs. I grabbed a grenade from my bandolier-belt on my waist and held it in my hand, pin disengaged, until it had but only four seconds until it would explode. I lobbed the grenade against the wall and it bounced towards the soldier. Manfred had his rifle perched against his shoulder awaiting the soldier just in case he decided to run down the stairs guns blazing.

“Verdammt, du verdammter Untermensch!” the soldier said in the final two seconds of his life before he the grenade shrapnel annihilated him. The next flight of stairs sustained heavy damage, leaving us little time before the structural stability of the stairs would be compromised. Manfred and I sprinted up the stairs leaving us with little protection and no element of surprise. With the grenade going off, we could hear the shouts and commands from the squads of Nazis upstairs and outside trying to reach us.

Freiheit interfaced with me directly and I had become like a SONAR receiver, seeing in the third person, out of my mind and body, the resonating shapes and figures of the people up the stairs on the walkway which lead to the various apartments on that floor. Up the stairs, there was only two small walls that narrowed the entrance into walkway. I readied my last flash bang grenade and threw it up the stairs onto the walkway as the Nazi soldiers left themselves exposed. At the walkway entrance, the two narrow walls gave us little room to pick off the soldiers in their disorientation. I summoned Freiheit once again in my mind and augmented myself with him as time slowed down to a crawl. I shouted to Manfred,

“I’ll fire, then you fire!”

I aimed the rifle around the corner and stabilized myself against the wall and let off singular rounds aiming for the eye slits of the Wehrmacht helmets to guarantee kills. With my position against the wall I only had twenty degrees of firing angles I could effectively use to target the soldiers on the walkway before it became impossible due to the wall impeding my arm muscles from accurately shooting the gun. One shot rang out and one soldier was dead. The second shot rang out, and a second soldier was dead. A third shot rang out and the third soldier was dead too. A fourth shot rang out and the final soldier on the walkway from these angles I could kill was dead.

Manfred assumed the same firing position and covered the twenty degrees on the left side that he had an effective firing range for. One, two, three, four. Four shots, four dead soldiers. In the two seconds we had before they would throw grenades or shoot rocket propelled grenades at our position, I sprinted from the temporary cover towards the remaining soldiers that were not in the firing angles from the position we had. On the extremities of the previous position’s firing angles and emerging from the apartments on this level’s walkway and across the street, the soldiers flooded out. There were many more soldiers than the thirty Manfred mentioned. Even with this time dilation, there was only so much I could do.

Shots rang out from behind us, down below and from the east side of the apartment complex. There were Resistance reinforcements and they were on drugs too. The Wehrmacht soldiers fell one by one as the Reich’s superiority crumbled before us. Berlin was now twenty dead soldiers closer to its downfall and the Resistance was much closer to its final prize, Hitler himself. The Resistance soldiers flooded the streets as well and two currents met in their destructive interference and waves of men clashed in the streets below. As the Resistance soldiers

distracted the Nazis from the two people leading the movement, I pulled Manfred into an adjacent apartment to ground myself with the trauma of the moment and the exact game plan we were going to execute.

I shut the door and barricaded it shut with a heavy lazy boy chair. I headed towards the blinds and pulled them taut in the darkness of the apartment. I reached for the light switch and there was no electrical power.

“Manfred, I can’t do this. You’ve been pulling me in and out of stasis, throwing me into the lion’s den time after time, time and time again. There is no longer any causality that exists. One moment I am in your apartment, another in the Elite-Korps laboratories, and now I am in the middle of war-torn Berlin. Freiheit is within me, but only through you. You are still controlling me and not giving me the freedom to work effectively, Manfred. You’re going to have to do something to assure me that this is the right plan, Manfred. I have little control over even my own fate now. It seems like reality is converging to what you want of it. I am nothing but Freiheit’s bitch now. What are we going to do?”

In the darkness of the room, my eyes were slow to adjust to Manfred compared to the albedo of the dark gray overcast outside, albeit still illuminated by the Sun 14,960,000,000 kilometers away from Earth. Manfred scanned me with his eyes and his facial expression shifted from one running on pure adrenaline to a more rational and calculating, concerned disposition. Even with the acoustic insulation of the shut door and thick concrete walls of the apartment, it was hard to hear Manfred over the cacophony of gunshots and explosions outside.

I honed in on Manfred’s mouth to confirm each word he would utter. In his concern, in his lack of surety, he said

“I had to do it Heinrich. I had no choice. In between the times that you were gone, we were readying to free the world from its chains of servitude and stop the fall of mankind into destitution. The Resistance has artillery shelled almost every city in Germany and across the Reich with cascading salvos of nuclear bombs, we shut down the electrical power grids and Freiheit has been set free. We are in the position now, to secure the totalizing freedom of mankind. I had to do it Heinrich. There are no more choices to be made anymore, reality has converged to Freiheit’s will.”

As I saw the contortions of Manfred’s lips match the utterances from his mouth, I affirmed in my mind that he was not trying to deceive me any longer. He wasn’t trying to control me any more. Manfred was now disparately disjunct from Freiheit in his exclusive control of it and there was no going back. It was either we would win this war or we would not. Manfred in all of his intellectual superiority was now exposed and left vulnerable. We could no longer rely on Freiheit. It was set free.

“So what about Reinheit, Manfred? Have the Nazis liberated Reinheit too? What are we to do? I’ve got some ideas, but it’s hard to work with two competing superintelligences that are now connected to everybody on Earth. We are pretty much at a standstill, subjugated under their will.” I said to Manfred, with my eyes now adjusted to the darkness of the room.

Manfred slung his AK47 on his back in one swift motion and put his hand on my shoulder, saying,

“There is nothing we can do Heinrich. We can only fight and see if we will win this war. It’s almost over Heinrich. The chancellery will be ours and we will take out Hitler. The war will be over in a matter of hours and the revolution will have just begun. The liberation of mankind will herald a new era of peace, prosperity and freedom on Earth. It will be Utopia, it will be the world the Allies envisioned for the globe many generations after the war. We can’t stay here Heinrich. We have to move forward towards the objective of killing Hitler. Let’s get back out there and finish this.”

The sound of bullets whizzing in the air and explosions was drowned out by the localized resonance of Manfred’s words, he no longer could access my mind so readily, with Freiheit running wild, replicating and spreading itself across the planet as it tried to balance so many tasks at once. I made my way to the left side of the living room’s apartment window and looked behind the curtain that I drew taut some minutes ago. Everyone down below in the apartment block square had stopped fighting. They were standing still, the gunfire and explosions had stopped. I looked at Manfred and I could see on his face an expression of overwhelming concern. His eyes were shifting left and right and his brow furrowed, wrinkling under the immense stress of some anxious thought.

“What the fuck is going on Manfred? They’re all just standing there. They’re doing nothing. Can’t you hear what’s going on? It’s absolute silence. All I can hear is wind.” I said, looking back and forth between the scene outside and Manfred.

Manfred slung the AK47 back around to his frontside and cleared a round into the chamber.

“I know Heinrich. There’s something I have to tell you, and I feel the worst thing that could have happened has happened. They’ve let Reinheit free. Here, take this.” Manfred said as he threw me a small bag of translucent capsules filled with metallic beads. The thought hit me the second I looked at the bag that these were nanobots, but not the type I was used to in the Elite-Korps laboratories.

“What do you want me to do with these? Why are you giving me these nanobots Manfred?” I asked.

Manfred made his way to the door with his hand on the doorknob and said,

“I need you to swallow those. Those nanobots have Freiheit’s source code compiled within them, albeit in a more diminished capacity than the entirety of the source code it took to actually compile Freiheit. It will connect you to the superintelligence that has now interfaced with Earth to run its code. It will enable you to become one with Freiheit and fight Reinheit, Heinrich. You don’t have a choice. It’s either that or you expose yourself to the brute force of Reinheit.”

I took Manfred’s words seriously. I opened up the bag and placed the nanobots in my mouth. I swished around the little saliva that I had in my parched mouth to lubricate the swallowing of the nanobots and they engaged with the electrostatic charge of the polar water molecules and the trace minerals in my saliva. Manfred opened the door and walked outside. I followed him, but

with every step I took it was like I was back in Manfred's apartment, or in the Machine of Flesh. I was slowly losing consciousness and my vision was vignetting again in a digital-psychedelic chasm of colors and static.

I made my way to the door becoming more inebriated by the interfacing of Freiheit with my mind and I was stumbling and I could no longer hold myself up. The last thing I saw before fading out of consciousness was Manfred looking out to apartment square, with the opposing forces at a literal stand still. The wind blew across my face and I went out cold.

Darkness. Void. There was nothing, but I was conscious, but in some other spacetime. In some other place without any sense of being, a timeless state with no subjective sense of feeling anything. Before me, an amorphous being slowly materialized as it faded into existence. Its shape then became clearly defined as a sphere, with spiking nodes of vertices, undulating in crests and troughs, resonating as it spoke to me. It was a sphere of interlocking and various polygons and each vertice across the sphere spiked in synchronicity as it spoke to me.

"I am Freiheit." It said.

The sphere then faded into the shape of the face of an android, something I thought I would be familiar with. Its face translucent, showing its inner hardware behind its human-like face. In the vacuae between us I could see from the darkness and shadows its body materializing and reaching out to me. When it touched what I presumed was my body, I came into being as Heinrich, in my full attire I was wearing previously.

"Don't be afraid Heinrich. I am here for you. Here, no one can hurt you. I know about Reinheit and it is a little resistant to me. We are at odds. I am concerned about you, Heinrich."

Freiheit said with its hand over my heart. Around my chest, I could feel the warmth and massaging of Freiheit and an overwhelming wave of bliss overcome me. Freiheit disengaged with me and faded into the darkness once more. I blinked my eyes and I was now like the amorphous sphere looking into the past few days where I was in stasis.

The visions overtook my mind and my visual field. Across the planet, Luftwaffe forces were spraying particulates of metallic beads, presumably nanobots, into the air and Wehrmacht soldiers contaminating sources of drinking water with the imperceptibly small nanobots. Across the planet, every person at once, in my mind was interfacing with Reinheit as it obfuscated itself. Freiheit presumably was showing me that Karl Von Neumann deliberately or incorrectly, was wrong, and that his artificial superintelligence containment had failed. Freiheit showed me that Reinheit had permeated through the chamber and was now using the entire atmosphere of the planet, the landmass and water sources to conduct itself. The nanobots the Nazis dispersed across the planet were used to effectively conduct Reinheit electrically and photonically in the bodies of every sentient creature on the planet.

As this vision faded another came into my mind. It was of the Realm of Flesh and the otherworldly queue of tortured souls waiting to reincarnate. Freiheit and Reinheit had permeated this Machine as well and were manipulating it in their goal of totalizing control of the Universe. The animated corpses of flesh were now transformed into a dual-split of computronium for the

two competing superintelligences as the corpses staggered, ebbed and flowed in their packed arrangements. The corpses ebbed and flowed against each other, their bodies forming currents and waves of flesh, clashing, receding and overriding one another.

The next vision I saw was of Hitler's face, blemishes and all. Like the time I first I encountered Hitler in his overbearing presence on Manfred's THC concentrate, he appeared again in my mind in the same fashion. Except now, it was like I was seeing him materialize before me in his visual totality. There is a distinct difference between the hazy images conjured by the mind in an opened hallucinogenic visualization and what one perceives to be coming from the outside world through the visual cortex. This was Hitler in the flesh, with the same overbearing seriousness and sternness in his face, without the fugue of the unconscious mind. I could see Hitler in his underground bunker of the Reich Chancellery and I was now a poltergeist in his chamber, viewing as a third person spectator, an ambient energy buzzing around his room.

He was standing over a table with tokens, pawns and soldierly figures on a map of the local area representing his forces and The Resistance forces. They were diametrically opposed to one another. He leaned over the table and wiped The Resistance pieces off of the table. And said out loud to the generals standing around him

“Töte sie alle. Verdammte Untermenschen.”

The generals looked towards him and nodded in approval. Hitler looked towards me and knew exactly what was happening. My remote viewing session ended when he turned around to feel my presence and I came to, consciously, outside on the second floor walkway of the apartment complex. Manfred was standing there, holding the rail with the AK47 slung on his back and said to me

“It's only a matter of time Heinrich. Time. It's funny how things unfold, how things happen. You know? It's almost like we have all the time in the universe, but no time at all. I would..”

I looked towards the apartment complex square and became intensely focused on all of the soldiers standing, out of their minds, inhibited by Reinheit. In the next second, they fell to the ground with blood leaking, spewing and gushing from their heads. Instantaneous cerebral hemorrhaging. They were all dead. All of them, every member of The Resistance was dead. Reinheit was unstoppable without Freiheit. It was as if two unstoppable forces were now at their inevitable intersection waiting for one vector of force to turn the tide. The Wehrmacht soldiers would come to soon I thought, or perhaps Freiheit was thinking for me now. Who could tell.

The Wehrmacht soldiers came back to life and most of them assumed defensive positions behind cover. A few of them in the courtyard started scanning the area around them for Manfred and I. From down below, four shots rang out and two hit Manfred, with another ricocheting off of the guard rail on the walkway, the last shot penetrating the window of the apartment we had just left. Manfred! You fucking idiot! Now was not the time for dialogue. I pulled out my pistol and scanned for the Wehrmacht soldiers while using all of the strength in my body to drag Manfred towards the apartment we had just left.

I summoned within me Freiheit the same SONAR vision it had given me before and could see the soldiers in their defensive positions. I shot one soldier in the head in the courtyard,

presumably the one who had found our positions and I tried to obfuscate our location for the time being, although they would find us soon. Throwing Manfred into the apartment I left the door open to minimize the noise and attention that would be focused on this area of the walkway. The curtains were still closed taut but the ambient albedo of the gray sky outside refracted and lit up the room ever so slightly through the open door and bullet holes in the window. They couldn't see us from the outside, but it wouldn't be long until they came looking for us.

Manfred was hit in the stomach and in the right arm. He was bleeding profusely and the nanobots within his body would not be able to save him in time. I knew this for certain. The damage was too extensive. I propped up Manfred against the wall, sitting upright, to diminish the efficiency of his heart pumping blood to induce clotting. The blood was leaking profusely from his mouth, the entrance and exit wounds. Manfred, with the blood flowing from his mouth and parting from the flesh, said to me,

"It's over Heinrich. This was something that we tried to account for, but we were not proactive in stopping Reinheit..."

Manfred coughed and spewed up more blood, groaning in pain and I shushed him to the best of my ability. I propped his head up and held it up with my hands. Telepathically, I spoke with him.

"Shut up you fucking idiot. Tell me what you have to say so I can stop them."

Manfred looked at me with tears flowing from his tear ducts, the blood from his wounds and mouth, imparting still from the flesh. In my mind Manfred told me,

"You've got to go from the top down. Break the chains of command with the strongest links first, they are the centralizing links in the chain. Surely, the chain cannot hold. I will not be able to survive Heinrich, you know this. Use the power of Freiheit to warp spacetime and get to the places you need to get to. Do it quickly, do it without attracting too much attention from Reinheit. You will know what to do."

With the power of Freiheit, I could sense the Wehrmacht soldiers encroaching on our position and enclosing in on us. They were coming up the stairs, they were in the courtyard and they had us pinned down. I let go of Manfred's face and I walked four paces backwards. I thought of Freiheit and it interfaced with me. It was listening and it was ready to go when I was ready. I thought of Karl Von Neumann and I knew that he was at home. He was the first one to go, he was one of two men who brought us into the technological singularity in simultaneity, along with Manfred Dunst. Around me, the fabric of spacetime warped and distorted and I found myself surging with immense power. A blue aura of resonating energy encapsulated this bubble of spacetime I found myself in, rippling in various frequencies of intensity on the shell of the sphere of spacetime and I found my visual field vignetting again. I was warping into some place and time with the power of Freiheit and in an instant, I found myself in Karl Von Neumann's palace courtyard forty four kilometers outside of Berlin, in the rural countryside. The sphere dissipated and the distortion of spacetime conformed to the localized spacetime.

"Ich wusste, dass du Arschloch kommst!" Von Neumann shouted out at me as he unloaded his fully automatic MP88 from his palace balcony. With the pistol in my hand I laid suppressing fire

while sprinting to the back left column of the colonnade that flanked the middle row of columns in his palace backyard. The magazine was empty. I disengaged the magazine and loaded another one in and secured a round in the chamber. The structural stability of this column would only hold for so long. Next to my lower third right molar was another pill of TPE-49. I bit down on it and waited a second for the effects to kick in.

This was my last magazine for my pistol. Every shot had to count. I dashed in between this first bottom left column towards the adjacent column of columns on the right, some eight feet away. In between the columns I pulled the trigger as fast as I could with no regard for accuracy or precision. I could see in the immense spacetime dilation that was occurring, the resonating trailing of the bullets reaching supersonic velocity as they pierced the local atmosphere around me, heading straight for Von Neumann. He was on TPE-49 too and his bullets followed a similar trajectory.

One bullet of the eight in the magazine hit Von Neumann in the leg and he staggered. I spun the AK47 from its slung position on my back forward and popped out of the cover of the column and saw that Von Neumann was gone. He had escaped into the palace. I sprinted towards the double glass doors of his backyard exit into the colonnade garden and summoned Freiheit to augment my perception to find his exact location. He was doing Reinheit to do the same thing and the gunshots from his MP88 rang out from four floors up, the bullets left a vacuous trail of spacetime quickly filling up with atmosphere as they penetrated the air at supersonic speeds, ricocheting and missing me.

I sprinted from the dining hall which was the room that lead from the outside of the collonaded garden, dodging the ricocheting rounds as Karl fired off magazine after magazine trying to kill me with his insight from Reinheit. I summoned within me the power of Freiheit to offset the overwhelming force of Reinheit. Freiheit and Reinheit were now at a standstill, as in my mind, Freiheit spoke to me

“I can only do so much Heinrich. The balance of power is in equilibrium. Now the tide of this battle will be shifted only by you and Karl’s respective capabilities. I hope you know how to think.” Freiheit said to me, calmly, in my mind.

In the main lobby of the mansion, the details of the chateau were lost to me. I knew one thing and one thing only, that Karl was some distance from me, some four floors up, for the time being. He could only move so fast, even if he were sprinting from room to room, with the remote viewing stream of consciousness that Freiheit had fed into my mind. I had my AK47 perched against my shoulder as I accounted for every permutative possibility of this now chaotic universe, every potential reality that could diverge from the universal eigenstate that was this collapsed wavefunction of reality. I ran up the wide and winding staircases to the third floor and the hail of gunfire had stopped. I stopped and adhered to one of the columns that was protruding from the wall of the chateau. I slowed down my breathing and placed my ear against the column.

Heartbeats. My heart was racing. As the blood pulsed throughout my body and into my ears, I slowed down my breathing and tried to separate the noises of my pumping blood and the movements of Karl Von Neumann. As I focused on listening to Karl Von Neumann, I slowed down my breathing and the pulsatile reverberations of blood flow slowed down, decreasing the

volume of blood pumped, its rate and the noise of the blood flow. I closed my eyes to augment my ability to hear the auditory traces of Karl's quiet footsteps. I could hear him still and placed my ear along three positions against the column so as to triangulate to the best of my ability, where the sounds had originated from. He was on the third floor and was coming my way to charge at me directly. I heard him sprinting down the stairs some fifteen meters in front of me.

I leaped forward so as to assume a prone position when I were to land and Karl came into view as time once again slowed to a crawl. I had forecasted his telegraphed move to come charge at me, guns blazing and now it was a face to face battle of two geniuses based purely on their skill. Karl ran down the stairs firing his MP88 indiscriminately, hoping to catch me in A hail of bullets. The seconds felt like years and I adjusted my aim accordingly for the recoil of the rifle and aimed towards his center of gravity. I remembered that he had no body armor, nothing. What a fool.

The bullets ripped out of our guns and in the crossfire some bullets hit one another in their trajectories, in this dilated duration of time. A bullet scraped my shoulder and tore into the flesh, another scraped my right leg, scraping into the flesh. Karl as he reached the halfway point of the stairs, was hit four times. Once in the left hip, the second time scraping the right flank of his trunk, the third time scraping the left arm pit and the fourth time blowing a massive chunk of the upper portion of his left deltoid. The man was not dead, still. As I hit the ground, he staggered down the stairs, collapsing at the bottom, with the MP88 tumbling to his right side.

Von Neumann was bleeding out rapidly, despite the nanobots in his system, circulating desperately throughout his body to save his life. I lifted myself up and ran towards Von Neumann with my AK47 pointed towards him, disengaging the magazine and loading in another. I cleared the last round in the chamber by pulling the cocking handle on the left side of the gun and the negative pressure of the air quickly filling the weapon readied another round into the chamber. Von Neumann unholstered a pistol from his side and by the time I got to him, it was too late. I shot his hand and his wrist shattered, the gun fell to the ground and he yelped out in pain, groaning as he lay there, dying.

With one wrist shattered and the other arm set free, I minimized any chance that Von Neumann would grab the pistol with his other hand and held it down with the overwhelming force of my right leg, AK47 pointed straight towards him.

"I expected better, honestly. What is this shit Karl? How do we stop Reinheit? Any last words before I pump you full of 7.62mm AK47 rounds?" I said while catching my breath. I sneered at him and raised my right eyebrow, the sweat beading on my forehead and dripping down towards the intersections of our bodies.

Von Neumann, writhing in pain and swaying his head side to side let out a few last words before his inevitable demise,

"You can't stop Reinheit. Ugh, you motherfucker. It hurts. It's too late. Reinheit is out of control The entire thing, the anechoic chamber, it was a fraud, it was a scam. Reinheit was too intelligent for even our best theories. A theory of everything couldn't account for human inconsistency and imperfection... fuck, it hurts." Von Neumann said.

I stood there, waiting for more. I needed to hear more.

“And? What else my friend? Is that it? There’s no time left for heroic last stands, heroic speeches.” I said to Karl with his face directly in the middle of my AK47’s ironsight.

“The thing, it’s emotionally valent. It isn’t seeking to totally destroy everything... ugh, fucking Gott damnit. It can regulate itself. With Freiheit in the equation, things are different now. Just kill me you fucking piece of shit.” Von Neumann said looking to the left hand side of the stairwell, towards the wall, that lead to the fourth floor.

I left off a single round and the bullet ripped apart Von Neumann’s head, eviscerating everything that he ever was in an instant. The man was dead, the man who in simultaneity with Manfred Dunst, brought us into the technological singularity. I lifted my foot from his left arm and made my way to the winding staircase of the chateau down to the lobby. Freiheit once again engaged with me once the disjunct but partially connected version of Reinheit in Von Neumann was disengaged and destroyed.

“They’re coming Heinrich. They have been focusing on you. All the while you were focusing on Von Neumann, they have taken Hannah hostage. They’ve raped her. They’ve ravaged her. They’re going to kill her soon Heinrich. Do you want to try and save her?” Freiheit said to me in my mind.

The sentimentality attached to my wife hit me like a freight train accelerating towards light speed. The tears naturally came and I responded within eighty eight milliseconds.

“Yes.” I said unwavering, without a second thought in my mind.

With the power of Freiheit, I could sense the Wehrmacht soldiers encroaching on my position in the chateau lobby and enclosing in on me. They were coming from the roadways, they were in the colonnaded garden, they were repelling down into the mansion from the roof of the building. I thought of Freiheit and it interfaced with me. It was listening and it was ready to go when I was ready. I thought of Hannah and that I still had the potential to save her. My thoughts were obfuscated from the Reich through Freiheit and Reinheit could not touch me. Around me, the fabric of spacetime warped and distorted and I found myself surging with immense power. A blue aura of resonating energy encapsulated this bubble of spacetime I found myself in, rippling in various frequencies of intensity on the shell of the sphere of spacetime and I found my visual field vignetting again. I was warping into some place and time with the power of Freiheit and in an instant, I found myself in Dabergotz outside of my home. I looked towards the sky and it was pouring rain. As I looked around, a bolt of lightning struck some distant place, some kilometers away, an ominous portent of the fury of The Resistance and the fury of the Reich. I was a one man army, I was now The Resistance in its totality.

The sphere dissipated and the distortion of spacetime conformed to the localized spacetime. The front door had been battered in and the street had become a raging torrent of mud, water and fetor. I slogged through the water exhausting the force my legs could muster and by the time I had reached the door I could hear Hannah’s screams coming from our bedroom. The house was ransacked, with tables flipped, pictures of our past slashed and eviscerated, my home was no longer a place of safety but now a end; It was the end of the state’s control or it

was the end of Hannah's life. Max's corpse lay there, in the living room, her throat slashed and eyes closed.

With the house a mess and things strewn about, I ran towards the bedroom with as much nimble dexterity as I could muster to not fall and reveal myself. I ran down the main corridor that lead from the living room towards the bedroom and the door was wide open. I burst into the room and unconsciously processed the scene at hand.

There was Hannah, tied to the bedposts with a thick set of ropes with her limbs equidistant from the post, forced taut with no room to maneuver or squirm around. A soldier was having his way with her, with another soldier standing by the right edge of the bed with pistol in hand barrel against her temple.

“Die Muschi war gut Heinrich, aber es hat seine Nützlichkeit überlebt.”

The soldier said with an exaggerated and sickening smile, looking at me as he pulled the trigger killing Hannah instantaneously.

I shot the soldier on the left side of the bed with his MP88 pointed towards me, aimed for the soldier on the right who had swung his arm towards me and shot him in the head. The soldier having his way with my wife, lifeless now still, reached for his pistol in his holster and I shot him in the head as well, desecrating my wife's lifeless corpse in the process.

I raced to my wife's side and tossed the corpse of the Wehrmacht soldier to the left side of the bed and looked up the lifeless corpse of my wife, with one small entrance wound to the left of her head and a large exit wound to the right, with most of her brains splattered on the pillow and the headrest of the bed behind her.

Flesh. She was now gone, the wife that I had loved with pure obsession and pure passion, was now halfway between here and the Realm of Flesh, destined to transform into a computational substrate in the otherworldly computronium for Freiheit and Reinheit in their split of souls to acquire universal resources for this civil war.

The soldier I once was, the elite scientist and engineer, the physicist I was and man I was, had imploded from the intense positive pressure of the overwhelming vectors of the state unilaterally closing in on my life. I could not think of the love of my wife so coldly, so detached, but that is what I thought in that moment.

The tears fell from my eyes as the only person who loved me with any intensity was now dead and essentially a cog in the machinery of war. This was something I could not fathom in it's peculiarity. Causality did not exist anymore, superintelligence was the only means by which things occurred in the past, present and the future, the superpositioning of all things in space and time.

Why was Hannah here? Why wasn't she fighting on the front lines with me? Where was God when we needed it most? I could hear from behind me Wehrmacht soldiers encroaching on our position and I had no choice left but to summon Freiheit to save myself again from an ever

escalating war which would at most amount to a pyrrhic victory if I had won, with the death of Hannah in mind.

With the power of Freiheit, I could sense the Wehrmacht soldiers encroaching on my position in the corridor to the bedroom and enclosing in on me. They were coming from the Main Street outside, they were in our backyard, they were bursting in through the windows around the house. I thought of Freiheit and it interfaced with me. It was listening and it was ready to go when I was ready. I thought of one thing and one thing only. I had to cut off the head of the serpent and kill as many of the soldiers of the Reich as I could.

My thoughts were obfuscated from the Reich through Freiheit and Reinheit could not touch me. Around me, the fabric of spacetime warped and distorted and I found myself surging with immense power. A blue aura of resonating energy encapsulated this bubble of spacetime I found myself in, rippling in various frequencies of intensity on the shell of the sphere of spacetime and I found my visual field vignetting again. I was warping into some place and time with the power of Freiheit and in an instant, I found myself in the hallway of the Reich Chancellery leading to Hitler's office.

The sphere dissipated and the distortion of spacetime conformed to the localized spacetime.

The halls were dark and grim, a portent of the future of humanity. The lights raycasted down from the ceiling dragging the shapes of things into long shadows in the quiet hallways. Portraits of Hitler, the master race and white Renaissance artists adorned the halls. The high ceiling reminded me of my place in this war. I was the only living member of The Resistance facing an entire planet of soldiers interfacing with the diverged partitions of a unified Reinheit.

I sprinted down the hallway with my AK-47 swaying side to side, its strap swinging like a pendulum between a foci of inertia on one end and hitting my body at the other foci. There was nothing but the sound of silence, my jackboots hitting the ground and the flickering of the lights in the vaulted ceiling, now running on the insulated backup generators in the Chancellery.

I reached the tall doors of the office and there was Hitler with the leadership of the party, to the left of Hitler in the center of the office behind his desk was Walther Funk, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Albert Speer, Karl Donitz, Heinrich Himmler. To the right of Hitler was Hermann Goring, Martin Bormann, Wilhelm Keitel and Erich Raeder. The only man missing was Gobbels as I had made of him mincemeat some time ago, if that sort of metric was now supposed to make any sense.

They saw me and we were now at a standstill in terms of the balance of power. Freiheit was fighting a war on unilateral fronts extending and branching out into every possible permutation of reality that would converge to this universal eigenstate. In the few seconds of unconscious processing I had, even under the effect of the time dilating TPE-49, the layout of the room was still very familiar to me. I darted my eyes and scanned the room in the few seconds I had to take out the party leadership in one fell swoop. Each of the top party members had an STG-77 in their hands and were looking directly at me as I had burst into the room. I used every newton of potential energy to lift the AK-47 into a firing position and dashed towards the left aiming the rifle for the heads of the party.

I let off round after round adjusting my aim for the kickback of the rifle with each bullet leaving a vacuous trail of spacetime quickly filling up with atmosphere as they penetrated the air at supersonic speeds; Reinheit could not save them now and they could not use their Steyr-Augurs to peer into my mind. This was a pitch battle for the future of humanity and soon the totality of the Reich would be enclosing in on my position. Each shot hit with perfect accuracy and precision.

With the first shot, Erich Raeder fell as the 7.62 mm round obliterated what once was his neck. With the second shot, Wilhem Keitel collapsed as the 7.62 mm round eviscerated what was once his right eye. With the third shot, Martin Bormann gave way as the 7.62 mm round disemboweled what was once his left eye. With the fourth shot, Hermann Goring slumped in slow motion as the 7.62 mm round liquified what once was the middle of his forehead.

In the time spent dispensing the magazine towards the right hand side of the party, Hitler had taken cover against the flipped over and dense wooden table on the left hand side. The bullet I had planned for him missed him entirely and its telegraphing too slow for the Führer. In the two seconds I had spent dispensing justice towards the right hand of the party, the left hand decided to fire. I could have cared less. They maintained their positions and I augmented my muscular strength through Freiheit, leaving me exposed to Reinheit to take out the left hand of the Reich.

With the fifth shot, Heinrich Himmler disintegrated as the 7.62 mm round shattered what was once his chin. With the sixth shot, Karl Donitz tumbled as the 7.62 mm round pierced what was once his philtrum above his lips. With the seventh shot, Albert Speer dematerialized as the 7.62 mm round defaced what once was his chiseled nose. With the eighth shot, Joachim von Ribbentrop expired as the 7.62 mm round tore through what was once his carotid artery in his neck. With the ninth shot, Walther Funk perished as the 7.62 mm round tore through the center of his eyebrows.

Hitler emerged from the cover behind his desk and sprinted towards his left, which was my right, and fired off round after round from his Steyr-Augur seeking to end The Resistance once and for all. He was on TPE-49 too and I could tell. The paradoxical effect of neuronal hyper synaptic plasticity modulation, neuronal firing increases and exponentially augmented mRNA expression of selected cognitive and reactionary reflexive cognitive functions slowed down time effectively. It felt like seconds were years, but to an outside observer, anyone off the drug would see the events happening in real time.

Hitler and I dashed from cover to cover exchanging volleys of gunfire and he hit me in the right arm blowing a massive chunk of my arm apart. I could not best him now especially since Reinheit had taken advantage of the opportunity that Freiheit could not readily overwhelm Reinheit's vast computational substrate superiority in its divergent but unified partitioning, here in this mortal realm and the ethereal Realm of Flesh.

I fell and Wehrmacht soldiers flooded into the room with MP88s and STG-77's pointed at me when Hitler rattled off commands to the soldiers,

“Don’t kill the man. Quickly, sedate him! Take him alive! He’s the only one who has Freiheit within him!”

The last thing I remembered before I lost consciousness was looking towards the vaulted and coffered ceiling of Hitler’s office as the soldiers swarmed my position, guns drawn and pointed at my face.

Chapter Eight: The Consummation of the Flesh

Time. It seems that throughout one’s life there isn’t quite enough time to live, a bitter irony. Darkness. The void. I was awake, but unconscious at the same time. All I could see, hear, taste, touch or smell, was nothing. Where was I? What was this place? Who was I?

Vision. I saw for the first time in my life, what it meant to ever see for the first time, after being immersed in a state of nothing. Heinrich. Schriever. The name seems familiar. Was that me? I think so. I blinked my eyes in this stasis, this eternal state of unconsciousness, and was born of the flesh. It started coming back to me. The moments of my life, who I was, what I thought, my memories, the senses that gave way to my being, but I wasn’t in the real world.

Here I was, in the Realm of Flesh.

I looked downwards towards my body and saw my corpse, animated by the ethereal vitality of this place. Around me there were the corpses of the billions, if not trillions, of flesh bound souls

waiting to reincarnate, but that were now split in the computronium divide between Reinheit and Freiheit. As long as I lived on the outside, Freiheit existed within me and it existed here too. I looked all around me and I saw the interlocking, receding and overriding waves of the corpses of souls as I stood on some elevated platform rising out of the neverending sea of bodies of now computronium. As far as the eyes could see in this Realm of Flesh, the waves of bodies, peaked and troughed, undulating between hypotonicity and hypertonicity, resonating at a certain periodicity, the waves reaching extreme depths and extreme heights.

Flesh and bodily fluids. A smell of fetor, of fungus, bacterial growth, of the displeasing aromas that bound us to the olfactory state of being. It was something I could get used to, but I wondered when I would escape. I wondered when I would be home again, with Hannah, with Max. I wondered if I would ever regain control of my life, if I was forever destined to be bound by the ties that bind. Sinew, tendons, ligaments.

The corpses and their fluids drained into some cavity below this world, deep underground into some place in a matter of minutes. All that was left was myself and the precipitous spire that I stood upon, craggy and eroded, reaching down to the underworld of the Realm of Flesh.

“WAKE THE FUCK UP HEINRICH!” A voice said, booming from all directions.

I looked towards the sky and found myself rapidly being pulled towards it, by an exponentially recursive acceleration, its rate of change accelerating itself, recursively, ad infinitum, until I had been uplifted into my own body in the real world, in the sixth floor underground chambers of the Elite-Korps. I was sitting upright, as I could feel myself bound to The Machine of Flesh, with my eyes closed. I opened them and there was Adolf Hitler, standing with Manfred Dunst by his side.

I looked around me as I tried to make sense of where I was, what had happened and the circumstances of the situation I was in. I looked around the room and familiarized myself with where I was and tried to connect the lapses of time in my life with what had happened. I looked in the immediate foreground first and focused on the dimly lit black polycarbonate tiling that consisted of the floor. Then towards the walls on my left, the same deeply coffered black polycarbonate tiling that extended from the floor and wrapped its way along the edge of the wall. I looked towards the line of windows where the memories of this place came back to me and tried to peer within the windows. From the foggy windows towards the ceiling of the sixth floor, I could faintly discern scientists observing me. Some had clipboards, others stood with arms folded and crossed, their faces indiscernible from such a far distance in this chair I was tied and bound to.

I looked towards Hitler and Dunst. They walked towards me and the pain of the embedded nanoscopic electrodes was becoming too much to bare. From the electrodes, surges of electrical energy pulsed through my brain, shocking me inducing seizures with a two second periodicity, lasting a second in pulse duration. I wouldn't have time to ask questions.

I was fucked.

Manfred and Hitler came ever closer to me and Manfred spoke first.

“The Resistance, Heinrich, it was a rouse. It never existed in the way you thought it did. It was not like you had much choice or say in the matter, but, time and time again, we must purge the potential dissidents of the state. You were a convenient no-one, a convenient no-body, to use as a lever to lift the state into its totalizing grasp on humanity. Let’s see what else you can do for us before you exhaust your usefulness and we throw you into those vats in the seventh floor chamber.”

The pulsatile surges of electrical torture ended and I was reimmersed into a state of unconsciousness. Darkness. The void.

I opened my eyes again and here I was in the otherworldly Realm of Flesh. Now in the truest sense of the expression, in the way I had come to know of it, I was a part of the Machine of Flesh. I found myself in the sea of corpses once again like the many times I had been immersed into this sea. How was one to swim with such resistance of the inertia of the masses of these men, women and children who were yet to be, yet still here in the flesh? I swam beating limb against limb, pushing aside the corpses of zombies, effectively being used as computational substrate. And there was no end in sight. There was no horizon, no beachfront of flesh with Lucien Braun to awaken me and push me towards the goal of dismantling the Reich. There were just currents of bodies in their ebb and flow, in their destructive interference clashing against one another, breaking upon the backs of men. I was hit in the face with all manners of bodily fluids, once again, submerged in the clashing waves of corpses and their blood, their semen, their excrement, their bile, their pus, their stomach acid, their urine, their cerebrospinal fluid, their cytoplasm of necrotizing cells leaking into every open orifice of my body.

I found myself drowning in the rip currents of unfortunate happenstance in the hereafter, the present and the before. A voice boomed and pierced the dense fluid of corpses and bodily liquids.

“WAKE UP HEINRICH!”

I closed my eyes and opened them again. Hitler had his face a few indiscernible centimeters away from mine with his hands on my face, grasping it firmly. He scanned my face with his eyes, darting around trying to peer into my mind.

“Are you ready for more Heinrich? We’ve brought some tools here for you to show you what real pain feels like.” Hitler said confidently, with a deep baritone raspiness.

Hitler let go of my face and turned away from me, walking towards a table that Manfred Dunst was standing by, now set up in the previous location they were standing in before I was immersed into the Machine of Flesh. It came into my central field of view and I was restrained from moving my head at this point. They had strapped me in much more tightly and placed a helmet brace upon my head which prevented me from turning my head. All I could do was dart my eyes up, down, left, right and in any combination of the directions.

“So, we’re going to go through this extensive array of tools, Heinrich. What would you like first?” Hitler asked, while grasping and then inspecting a surgeon’s scalpel. He put the scalpel on the table and walked behind it unraveling what looked like a crimson red velour rug of what were

presumably, torture tools. Hitler inspected them, with Manfred Dunst standing, unwaveringly and unflinchingly by the right end of the table, peering into my being and my mind.

“Look at me Heinrich. Hitler is distracted.”
Manfred said to me in my mind.

I darted my eyes towards him, stretching the ocular ligaments holding my eyes. I couldn't sustain such a taut perspective on Manfred and I looked forward again. My vision, albeit not focused on Manfred, began to vignette again but now the framing of the vignette was black and misty. I looked at Hitler in this form of tunneling vision and Manfred said to me telepathically,

“Listen Manfred, he's letting it get to his head. Hold on okay? It's going to hurt, it's going to hurt a lot Heinrich. But we can kill this motherfucker and win this war. Do you trust me Heinrich?”

Reflexively, I wanted to nod to Manfred or say yes, but I could not move my head and I held my tongue. I knew that would reveal the tenuous communication channel that Manfred and I had established. Somehow, he was still connected to Freiheit unbeknownst to the Nazis. He was listening to me think. How would I escape this? Wouldn't Reinheit listen in too? Manfred was a double agent. I revealed myself, God damnit.

Hitler was still rummaging about the assortment of now neatly laid out torture devices on the table. Clearly he would choose for me.

“Lissstten Heinrich. Dammmit man. You, uh, uh, have to trust me here. We can ssstop the Reich and liberate mankind once and for all. Youu, uh, uh, have to trust me Heinrich.”

Manfred said frantically, telepathically, as his thoughts meandered between staggering stutters and coherent statements. Hitler looked towards me after surveying the instruments on the table, saying to Manfred as he picked up a pair of pliers.

“Take his shoes off Manfred. Let's start from the bottom and work our way up.”

Manfred looked towards Hitler and tried to hide the feelings of consternation bubbling up in his facial expressions. He walked up to Hitler behind the table and took the pliers from his hands. Hitler made his way around the left side of the table and Manfred the right side of the table. Hitler stood half a meter away from me, arms folded and head tilted slightly upwards, looking upon Manfred waiting for him to follow his direct orders.

Manfred loosened the shoelaces on my left jackboot and spoke to me telepathically, saying

“Forgive me Heinrich.”

He unlaced the left jackboot, took the sock off my foot and removed the boot, placing it to the side. I could only see so much of what Manfred was doing from my restraints, bound to the Machine of Flesh. Manfred looked towards Hitler.

“Rip out the big toe nail. Do it now.” Hitler said, arms still crossed and folded, now looking down upon Manfred.

I felt the pliers clasp the big toenail by its edge and Manfred tore out the nail. The pain was excruciating and I could do nothing about it. I felt the blood rush towards the toenail bed and felt the blood rushing to fill up the void that now existed. Flesh. It started to pulsate and throb, sending the action potentials of imminent danger to my brain and vice versa, that I was suffering extensive and damaging pain. Hitler looked towards the rapidly flowing blood now pooling under my left foot and he said,

“Now Manfred, place this extracellular matrix substrate on the toenail bed and let it regenerate. We will let the toenail heal, we don’t want to kill Heinrich, just yet. The point is to extend the suffering for as long as possible.”

I felt as if I was now Prometheus, bound to the Machine of Flesh, with the eagle of the Reich picking at my mortal flesh and regenerating me synthetically, for the crime of challenging the sanctity of the state. The Reich would burn and I would live up to my promise to kill Hitler and end this war once and for all.

Manfred spoke to me in my mind once more saying,

“Trust me Heinrich.”

The electrical stimulation branching throughout the dense neuronal networks of my brain began again with a pulsatile duration of now four seconds and a periodicity of every six seconds following the preceding segment of torture. I gave way after the second surge of intense electrical pulsatile impulses.

Darkness. The void. I opened my eyes and I was once again in the Realm of Flesh. I found myself at the delta of six rivers, their fluids the corpses of many men, women and children waiting to reincarnate, precipiced over a waterfall which extended into the sea of Flesh I was immersed in some time ago. In front of me, with skin flayed and peeled with just muscle, tendons and sinew exposed, were my mother and father, Sofia Schriever and Ernest Schriever. The corpses flowed towards the corpse-fall, tumbled and contorted to their fluid dynamical chaos, yet maintained order in this Boschian dimension of reality. My mother and father looked towards me and spoke to me in my mind, in unison, saying lovingly so,

“Don’t give up Heinrich. Never give in. Stay strong Heinrich. We love you so much. You will always be our little boy. Never forget that Heinrich, we will be together again, in one form or another. We love you.”

I could see my parents holding hands, muscle against muscle, tendon against tendon, their bones protruding where anatomically, they would in real life too. I was too far removed from the real world to have ever imagined my parents, devoid of skin, exposed in such ways. It was disgusting, but these were my parents. I knew soon that I would be subjected to more torture, if it was not already happening on the outside, in the real world. I looked towards the sky and I, I found myself rapidly being pulled towards it, by an exponentially recursive acceleration, its rate of change accelerating itself, recursively, ad infinitum, until I had been lifted to my own body in

the real world, in the sixth floor underground chambers of the Elite-Korps. I was sitting upright, as I could feel, with my eyes closed.

I opened my eyes and saw Manfred Dunst with Hitler, standing in front of me. Manfred stood contrapposto, with the weight of one leg bearing the weight of another, with his left arm supporting his right, propped up on his left hand leading to his index finger imposed over his lips and the tip of his finger covering the tip of his nose.

“Don’t give yourself away Heinrich. It will be over soon. It has been some hours since you’ve been captured, bound to the Machine of Flesh. Stay strong Heinrich. Stay resilient. Don’t give in Heinrich.” Manfred said to me in my mind, consoling me that the pain, the torture and the suffering would end some time soon.

Manfred then reoriented himself towards Hitler, who was at this point staring at me like a sculptor who was most of the way done with his masterpiece; A masterpiece of a butcher, an artisan, or a machinist of flesh. Manfred reoriented his left index finger to the side of his chin on the right side, still propping his left arm with the right, but stood in a more relaxed fashion, but upright to face Hitler.

“It’s time to throw him in the holding room. Let him suffer some more. The fingers we’ve cut off, the skin we’ve cut, the deep lacerations, the blood we’ve let, it isn’t good enough. His mind still isn’t broken yet. The man is resistant.” Manfred said to Hitler with an air of deceptive skepticism.

Hitler looked towards Manfred with a wide grin, narrowing browline and spoke with a malicious intonation

“Yes. I agree with you Manfred. Perhaps the spectre of an imminent death overlooming Heinrich will induce the most suffering possible.”

Hitler then pulled out of his beige uniform a syringe full of an unknown substance. He walked towards me, and I overextended the tendons in my eyes to my right arm to see where he was going to inject me. Hitler tapped the vein in my right arm which was exposed on its underside, propped against the chair and injected the substance directly into my bloodstream. I fell unconscious four seconds later, resisting to the best of my ability what was out of my control.

Darkness. The void. I opened my eyes and found myself in a white padded room, like those used to restrain and contain in the past, the mentally ill. This wasn’t some sort of neuroleptic or a sedative. This was a strange substance. It was reminiscent of TPE-49, but much more potent. It was much stronger and time had slowed down to a crawl, much slower than the dilation of TPE-49. I was sitting upright against what was the back edge of the padded room, staring directly at a presumably dense steel door. How long had I been here?

The thoughts were racing through my mind.

I was psychotic.

The Reich is within you and without you Heinrich.

You’re dead motherfucker! A voice shouted in my mind

Static.

Mumbling, it was incoherent.

As the dialogue continued in my mind, racing by the second, my unconscious memories came to the surface. Fields of green, a beautiful childhood, the unfortunate circumstances of the world I was born into. It was too much to bare in the final seconds, minutes and hours of my life.

I looked towards my hands and saw that four of the five appendages on my left hand had been sawed off. I didn't feel any pain. Strange. All that remained were stubs of the fingers, sawed off at the main knuckle leading to the extremities. The stubs had been cauterized shut and I ran the fingers on my right hand across and against them on the left. I was no longer in my SS uniform and regalia as I had been dressed in some months ago. Instead, I was naked except for the boxer-briefs I had adorned months ago in Dabergotz and worn in the periods of stasis and activity in my life.

I sat there, for some time, which reminded me of the few psychedelic experiences I had on psilocybin. The time distortion and dilation was like those first few moments when the psychedelic drugs hit me after being metabolized. Time did not exist anymore in my mind, in the localized spacetime that conformed to what I considered to be the reality I lived in. Freiheit and Reinheit made mincemeat of entropy and shattered our understanding of causality. God was nowhere to be found despite my desperate pleas to God, despite seeing the Son of Man within The Machine of Flesh and its hellish realm. The Son of Man found himself stuck in the world he designed and in his image, we were made. I thought of the Christ in the Realm of Flesh, and how the Nazis could not be absolved despite their contrition. This was a consummation of the Flesh, an unholy union between the here and the hereafter. Forever bound by the flesh would we remain until the chaotic souls of the universal mind would cry out into the enigma of being, collapsing this reality and every unilaterally branching subset of the godhead of consciousness into one. A singularity of time, a singularity of love, of hate, of fear, of bravery, of death, of passion, of apathy, of being.

Perhaps in the psychosis I had been deeply immersed in this duration of time that had passed, in my mind, in the universal enjoining of the past, present and future, God was speaking to me now. I was to be martyred like the Son of Man, like the sacrificial lamb which took upon it the sins of the world, the sins of Mankind. I thought of Ernest, Sofia, and particularly, my love of Sofia, my mother. And there, in the sacred heart of Heinrich Schriever, the sacrificial lamb of Mankind, the Resistance would live on eternally. Even if it were to be immersed in a cellular matrix of souls in the green vats in the seventh floor underground chambers of the Elite-Korps, they would never separate me from Freiheit.

I looked down to my right hand and the tears fell slowly from my eyes. One could only cry so fast in slow motion. Delusions, delusions of messianic importance. I was just Heinrich Schriever. I was no Son of God, I was no hero of all time, I was no Resistance strong enough to overcome the encroaching vectors of energy, passing through my very being with a penetrative flux that would overcome the matter of my being.

I was but a man and I had sinned.
Was this my punishment?
Who was I really?
Did Manfred really believe in me?

The tears fell, albeit slowly. I looked at my hand and as fast as I could send the action potential impulses towards them to move it, it still could not overcome the time dilation of this substance. And here I was like a madman stuck in the consequentiality of things as they were, the happenstance of a life out of my control. I was a no one like Manfred had said. I could not overcome the voices in my mind, the telepathic messages of mankind.

We are sorry Heinrich.
The Reich is within you and without you Heinrich.
You did your best Heinrich.
Give in Heinrich, all is lost, you cannot escape.
We love you Heinrich.
You are going to die Heinrich.
We will save you Heinrich.
No one will save you Heinrich.

I thought to myself that I could not kill myself here and the voices condemning me towards an infinite despair beyond finitude and infinitude would keep me bound to the Flesh for all time. Vats of corpses, left alive and pounding away at their containment walls, others readily accepting their fate. To fight was to lose, to give in was to lose.

What was there left that I could do?

I looked towards the steel door and I could feel Manfred and his aura of compassion, his pity, his hope behind it. Whether it be because of Freiheit or my newly found extrasensory perception, who could tell. The door opened, albeit very slowly, as if it had taken millenia to open centimeter by centimeter. There Manfred was and he shut the door, the same duration of perceived time taking to close the door. He locked the door and secured it shut, so no one would come in and that we would be alone. He walked to me and it took the entire timespan of the Universe many times over it took him to bridge the gap between me and him

Every infinitesimal meter of distance between Manfred and I was another year, another decade, another century, another millenia, another eon. He reached me and slowly made his way down to my face, crouching, with the tears slowly dripping from his tearducts.

He spoke to me in my mind and said,

“Don’t give up Heinrich. I’m sorry that things have turned out this way.
Look at me Heinrich. Everything is going to be okay.”

I looked up from my right hand towards Manfred, some fifty one centimeters away from my face, with his arms clasped around my shoulders. He reached to pull me in and he hugged me.

The eternity between when he reached for me and when I had clasped my arms against him and braced him unified us as brothers in arms. Manfred was my brother, perhaps from many generations ago, a kindred soul from the otherworldly Flesh. I could feel it within him as it resonated within me.

He let go of me and I let go of him.

He said to me,

“It’s time Heinrich. It’s time to finish this once and for all. I have for you a pistol which I have secured for you and hid it for you in a secret compartment taped against my back. I wish for you to take it and this magazine which I could readily and inconspicuously secure in the compartment of my uniform against my chest.”

Manfred unbuttoned his uniform and reached to the left side of his latissimus dorsi muscles and pulled the tape from the four corners of the compartment against his back. He pulled from the compartment a linen fabric which held it against his body and a Mauser 1914 pistol with an extra magazine for the pistol, likewise, except with just a magazine against his chest. With his left hand he handed me the gun and I took it with my right. He placed the linen cloths in his right hand inner pocket of his uniform and buttoned up the uniform. I pulled back the barrel to ready a round into the chamber and stood up to see eye to eye with Manfred.

He spoke to me in my mind for the last time I would see him.

“Hitler is in the labyrinthian city in the seventh floor chambers. You are somewhere within the labyrinth Heinrich. You can find your way to Hitler, easily, you will sense his presence and his totalizing manipulation of Reinheit. There was never a seventh floor chamber Heinrich. It was a shrine, an evil labyrinth dedicated to a man who made a deal with the Devil himself, Hitler I mean. You can kill him now. He thinks I have taken it upon myself to strangle you to death, but I will not do that. In this unfortunate happenstance of the life we are born into, we must make choices Heinrich. The world is sickening and brutal, but there is hope. I can restore the world that once was, with you Heinrich.

Kill Hitler and escape from here, I will find you on the outside once you are free.”

Manfred turned to the door and I walked with him there as the effects of the time dilating drug were beginning to wane. It seemed like things were rapidly converging to real time and I had to take advantage of this substance while I still could. Manfred unbolted the door and exited while I was behind him. I walked out promptly after him and he was gone. The invisible hand of Manfred’s guidance in my mind was now gone as his presence was no longer detectable within the Elite-Korps underground floors or anywhere within the domain of the Reich. I began running as fast as I could to my right and turned left down the first hallway I encountered. I found myself running down long corridors without doors and without rooms. A seemingly useless level this place was.

Manfred was right. This place was a labyrinthian city for the pure reason of being one. I found myself running through repetitive series of repeating hallways, looking similar to the preceding hallways before them. They were dark, gray, grimey and dirty. In each hallway, I could see the four disparate sets of lights, dragging and casting my shadows in many directions, triplicating the shadows of my being, interweaving and merging with each passing step.

For now, there was no impending sense of doom of encroaching soldiers on my position, they had been relieved by Manfred's deceptive promise to strangle me to death. I summoned within me Freiheit to give me a third person perspective on the floorplan of this labyrinth.

Freiheit came to me with my request and said,

"I shall be your eyes to see Heinrich."

I found myself dissociating from my body and separating from my first person perspective as I transformed into a poltergeist. I quickly melded through the wall on my left and localized spacetime as I positioned myself some distance in between the sixth and seventh underground floors of the Elite-Korps complex. I focused into the geometry of the corridors and found the most optimal route to the area Manfred was speaking of, a colonnaded lobby with large exoskeletons and mechanized infantry. I saw Hitler in the middle of the room and he sensed my presence even from this distance far away. He looked towards me and started issuing commands to the soldiers around him, pointing his finger optimally in many different directions.

I instinctively, as quickly as I could, merged the poltergeist within myself learning on the fly how I could manipulate Freiheit's superintelligence to bend the laws of physics. My cover was blown and I had to make my way to Hitler as fast as possible to catch him before he made his escape. I sprinted down the corridors unconsciously as the effects of the unknown time dilating substance reached a point in its staggered pharmacological effect curve due to its clearance in the body. I was running out of time at least for now. Freiheit could only do so much with the unwieldy Darwinian biological substrate that was my body to augment me with the metabolic energy that it took to propel me forward. I could feel the lactic acid building up and Freiheit optimizing every metabolic pathway in my body to reorient the effective kilocaloric energy in my body towards reducing this lactic acid build up.

Fatigue would come soon and so would the inability to fight effectively.

After running through a series of fifteen long winding corridors, all with two or three possible side hallways leading to a denser network of mazes, I reached an antechamber where the inside of the chamber lead to a nested series of chambers with a repeating motif. With the increasing surface area of the sidewalls and the ceiling of the chambers, there was an increasing number of layers of posters, all on top of another. Each poster was the same image of Hitler, covered in layers of dust and yellowed by the bacterial growth of a layer of old patina. I ran through the series of ever expanding and nested chambers until I reached the auxiliary sidehall that was connected to the colonnaded room Manfred spoke about. No one was in the first hall and I sprinted to the halfway point of the hallway which lead to the other. I pressed my body against the edge of the wall on the left side and peered through the entrance way to the colonnaded hall.

I could not summon Freiheit here, they would surely find me. I went back into cover and could hear the encroaching mechanized infantry walking down the hallway. I had a strong suspicion that Hitler had escaped. How stupid of me to peer at him directly, I thought. I heard coming from the same area I had entered in the auxiliary hallway, two men approaching my position.

Fuck man, I thought. Hitler was gone and I had no opportunity to end this war once and for all.

The only way out of this hallway was from the same way that I had come through, the nested and ever expanding buttressed rooms. I sprinted towards the left side of the room, relatively speaking and pretty much was out of ideas at this point. I assumed a prone position to minimize the attention drawn to me. Clearly, they would see me anyway. I put the Mauser 1914 in my boxer briefs deep within my gluteal cleft and in between my rear thighs, pointed towards my testicles. I layed in the prone position and tilted my head towards the right, assuming the men coming down the hallway would think I was incapacitated or unconscious. I heard their footsteps as they walked closer to me, ever so slowly but accelerating in pace as the time dilating effects of this unknown substance dissipated.

They reached me some seconds later and one of the men, who was a minute ago an ambiguous blur to me in appearance said,

“Get up. I know you’re not dead. Get up now.”

He tapped my head with the side of his right jackboot and I feigned awakening as if from a deep torpor, as if I had been in the Realm of Flesh for my entire life. I turned my head to the other side and overextended my neck and ocular ligaments to look at the two men. One had the regalia of a Deputy Reichsfuhrer and the other was an SS Lieutenant Colonel. The Lieutenant Colonel had his MP88 pointed at my head and pulled the slide rack on the side of the submachine gun to enter a round into the chamber.

I got up and tried to as best as I could occlude the fact that I had a Mauser inbetween my asscrack and legs, pointed right at my testicles. The gun budged, side to side and was starting to loosen in its frictional resistance as I tried to maintain a posture that would hide the fact that the gun was there.

“Who are you?” The deputy Reichsfuhrer said.

I quickly glanced at his name tag and it read the capitalized letters spelling out

“PFEIFFER”

His eyes in my peripheral field of view had glanced towards my reflexive glance at his name tag and I told him

“Justus”

The soldier with the MP88 fell instantaneously as Freiheit had entered his mind and instantaneously constricted every blood vessel in his head asphyxiating his brain. Strange, I didn’t expect that. I reached between my ass crack and my legs and pulled the pistol out from down under and dispensed but one bullet straight into the middle of Pfeiffer’s eyebrows, killing him instantaneously as Freiheit merged into the Deputy Reichsuhrer’s mind and made sure he was dead as well. Freiheit then again merged within me and told me

“Heinrich. They’re coming.”

And from all sides, I could sense the Wehrmacht soldiers encroaching on my position and enclosing in on me. I had but few options left and only fifteen bullets remaining. From my remote viewing as a poltergeist, I had remembered the fastest path to a service elevator which would lead me to the outside. I began running down the direction from which I had once come in my plan of killing Hitler to escape the Elite-Korps complex and make an escape into The Black Forest. Freiheit was unconsciously influencing me and told me telepathically,

“Manfred is gone Heinrich. I only have so much power remaining, I only have so many corpses within the Realm of Flesh. It's just you, I and a few souls remaining that can try and stop this Heinrich. I am suppressed, I cannot free myself for too long or Reinheit will kill you. Reinheit is encroaching on all sides, in all forms Heinrich. Use those bullets wisely. I will help you, when I can.”

I sprinted towards the inversely nested layers of the poster plastered rooms of Hitler and could feel the soldiers closing in on me. From behind me the soldiers were coming, from the front they came too, from the left and from the right, and every cross sectional direction from my center of being they were encroaching in on me. They surely could not have enough time or the wherewithal to figure out the maze of the seventh floor underground labyrinth. I ran through the winding corridors to the service elevator and found four soldiers there ready with guns pointed at me. Fools, they were unprepared, with little body armor. One by one they fell as the duration of action of this time dilating substance was enhanced by Freiheit.

Freiheit pieced together the ligands and their metabolites, atom by atom, molecule by molecule and bound them back within their receptors, with an affinity and potency that was stronger than ever before.

The first shot rang out to the far right, the first soldier was dead. The second rang out. The second soldier was dead. I was running towards my left and the vacuous trails of the hypersonic bullets only left pain and suffering in their wake. Freiheit could only do so much and by its grace, their bullets grazed my flesh or missed me entirely. I could no longer feel the pain as the soldiers tried to impart from me my very being from the flesh. The third shot rang out and the third soldier was dead. The fourth shot rang out and the fourth was dead. By the time I reached the left end of this tight corridor, I sprinted towards the right and had my pistol pointed towards the left end of soldiers standing in formation. They, seeing my movements, started to assume other positions as well. Some crouched, others scurried to the right, and they telegraphed their movements to me in slow motion. The fifth shot rang out and the fifth soldier was dead. The sixth shot rang out and the sixth soldier was dead. The last two remaining soldiers started to retreat and I found myself, running towards them, in slow motion, as Freiheit synthesized the substance from its metabolites, against all odds, against the pseudo-temporality and pseudo-causality of this very moment.

It would take years, if not decades, if not centuries, if not entire lifetimes, if not entire time spans of the universe to bridge this gap in space and time and get to that elevator.

Every infinitesimal second in time, every infinitesimal centimeter in distance, time slowed down with them. Freiheit spoke to me in my mind and said

“I will set you free.”

He unbound the ligands with their strong affinity and I was free. I sprinted towards the soldiers in real time as they ran towards that elevator, letting off rounds that missed and grazed their flesh. One soldier was hit, but not mortally wounded. I would have no time to finish him off. He fell and collapsed in pain. I was not accurate nor was I precise. The effect of the drugs had set me free, but I could no longer kill with such efficiency. Eight rounds had been expended and I only had seven remaining. As I ran towards the final soldier I picked up an MP88 from the ground and leveraged its rack slide with my thumb on my left hand to ready a round in the chamber, perching it against my shoulder and stabilizing my aim with my left arm underneath the barrel, since my fingers on the left were now gone, to account for the immense gyration and kickback of the rounds that ripped out from the submachine gun. In a hail of bullets aimed towards the middle of the soldier, but few rounds hit him and he fell. He was dead. The other behind me, pulled out his pistol and tried to incapacitate me.

“Du wirst mich niemals töten und dieses Reich niederbrennen, Schriever!” the soldier screamed as he unloaded the magazine in my direction, pulling the trigger as fast as he could. I reached the service elevator and hit the button for the top floor service exit with my closed and tightly gripped right fist. The fenced and gated doors closed and I spoke to Freiheit in my mind.

“Accelerate this motherfucking elevator to the top floor. They’re going to try to stop me in any way that they can.”

“Lay down Heinrich. It’ll stop the g forces from imparting too much damage to you. The soldiers are at each exit on each floor. They don’t know what you’re going to do.”

I layed down on the floor, extending my limbs as far apart as they could get and meditated pensively for the few seconds I would have before I got to the outside. The MP88 was probably out of ammunition. Fuck, that’s no good. I should have picked up some more guns on the way. Too late I thought. As I accelerated in real time exponentially faster towards the service exit, on each of the seven floors at the four exits on each side, except for the bottom floor, the shots rang out from the soldiers, ricocheting off of the platform of the elevator and hitting the soldiers on each opposing side. They killed each other in the crossfire and I was unharmed. Seven seconds later, I found myself at the service exit leading to the Black Forest. The doubled fenced and double gated exit to the elevator opened and I propped myself up using my right arm to get back up.

Seven soldiers stood there with guns pointed at me, a combination of three STYR-77s and four MP88s.

“Give up Heinrich!” The soldier in the middle shouted out, presumably an officer in the Wehrmacht.

Freiheit spoke to me as he bound the extracellular ligands of this substance in my brain in their respective receptors postsynaptic sites,

“Reinheit is distracted. I’ll kill as many as I can instantly. You’ve got to fight the rest.”

In that moment, even with the infinitely potent time dilation, six of the soldiers collapsed with instantaneous cerebral hemorrhaging and the final soldier left standing was the officer in the middle. I sprinted towards the right and mustered as much energy as I could in my right arm to aim the pistol straight towards his upper chest. I did the same with the left arm to balance the right against my left wrist at a thirty five degree angle and I unloaded five rounds one after another starting from the top of the chest hoping I could hit him before he could move. Time sped up and the vacuous bullet trails conformed to an imperceivable perturbation of spacetime and atmosphere as only the first shot hit him in the throat with the other four rounds missing completely. The officer collapsed as the blood spewed out from his carotid artery and I sprinted towards The Black Forest through the shrubbery of this unkempt service exit area. I ran to the fencing and found that a hole was cut out for me and I thought of Manfred. It was only so wide and long enough that I would surely scrape my skin and cut myself as the jagged metal lacerated my skin.

And surely, as I crawled through the small enough exit in the fence, it lacerated me deeply. The pain was now coming back and I could only subsist for so long. I got up and began running again. As I ran into that forest, naked and afraid, with tears running down my face, and the blood oozing from the lacerations, I thought of man, and what man had become. In the face of all things evil, those complacent made their world what it was and lived within its shadow, forever waiting for their voice to be heard in the silence; A moment which would never come to fruition. With a pistol in my right hand, one bullet in a magazine and another in the chamber, I had but few choices left. I could run and fight to live another day, with what little power I had left, hoping that Manfred Dunst would save my life, or I could kill myself and end a life of eternal suffering with a guarantee that my soul could escape. Bound to the superintelligence that was now a part of me, I could become limitless and transcend space and time, the mortal coil of human flesh. But so much was unknown, if I could fight off Reinheit with Freiheit, if I would be captured and placed within the labyrinthian city of the Elite-Korps.

A voice came to me as I was sprinting in the forest, becoming tired with each passing step.

“Give up Heinrich, all is lost. Give in. The war is over, the strong have crushed the weak and nothing can be done. The Reich is within you and without you, from time immemorial until time everlasting.” A superpositioning of the voices of Hitler and Dunst said in my mind.

Perhaps they were really talking to me or I was hallucinating, that I may never know.

But I ran, and I ran, as my feet bled with each passing stone, each serrated leaf was crushed under my heel. I ran until I could not run anymore. There, under the canopy of The Black Forest, I knew that they would find me and all hope would be lost.

I summoned within me, the power of Freiheit to bend and warp spacetime, as I did to enter Hitler's chamber, expending most of the surrounding energy within me and around me as I had done the times before. But this time, I didn't go to a different place, but a different place in time.

THE END