

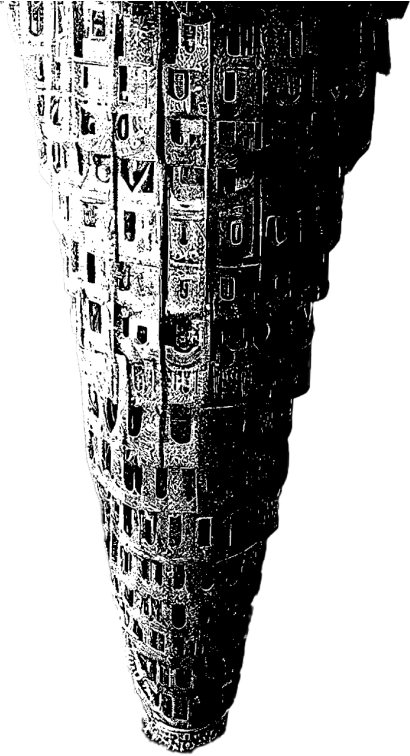
LAVELLE

KHRISTIAN

SETTLE



ACT 1



"Who...are you?"

I see...

Hello...

I have a story you may be interested in.

Long ago, in the annals of time, there existed a tower, a monument to human ambition and folly. This tower was a testament to the ceaseless striving of mortals to reach the heavens. But as the tower rose higher and higher, so too did the hubris of those who built it.

They sought to breach the divine realms, to ascend to the realm of the gods themselves. But their arrogance angered the heavens, and in their folly, they were cast down, their languages scattered, their unity shattered. The tower stood as a monument to their failure, a reminder of the limits of mortal ambition.

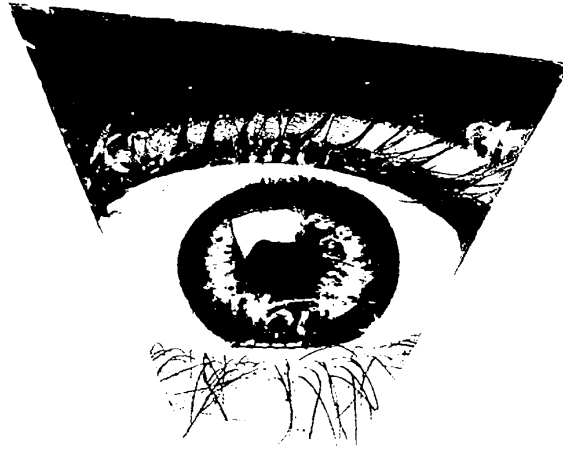
And yet, in their defeat, there was a lesson to be learned. For in their quest for greatness, they lost sight of what truly mattered. They lost touch with their humanity, their connection to one another. They became slaves to their own ambition, blind to the beauty of the world around them.

Interesting isn't it?

Now let me ask you again, who are you?"

CHAPTER 1:

ECHOES OF THE TOWER



Suddenly jolting awake, Employee 1111 finds himself in his sleeping pod, surrounded by the soft glow of the chamber's lights. He blinks, trying to shake off the remnants of the dream that still linger in his mind. The voice from his dreams echoes in his thoughts.

Slowly, he raises himself from the pod, his movements automatic and precise. The routine of the morning helps to ground him, pushing the dream to the back of his mind. As he goes through the motions of getting ready for the day, his thoughts drift back to the dream.

"Who was that?" he pondered to himself
The dream felt so real, as if someone was trying to convey a message to him. But what message? And why him?

As he moved through his morning routine, he moved with mechanical efficiency, a man on autopilot. He cracked two eggs into a frying pan, the sizzle of the cooking eggs filling the air. A slice of toast popped out of the toaster, and he placed it on a plate with the eggs, the same breakfast he had eaten every day for as long as he could remember.

Employee 1111's morning routine was as methodical as the ticking of a clock, each action performed with a precision that spoke of years of practice. His small, cramped apartment was a testament to his minimalist lifestyle, with sparse furnishings and a color scheme that leaned heavily towards shades of grey. The only hint of color came from a small potted plant on the windowsill, struggling to survive in the harsh artificial light.

Dressed in his standard uniform, he added a touch of formality with a blazer provided by the Department of Surveillance. The blazer was a symbol of his allegiance to the department, a reminder of the rules and protocols that governed his life.

With a quick glance at the clock, he realized he was running late. He hurriedly strapped on his meta mask, a sleek device that connected to the neural link transplant in his brain. It greeted him each morning, provided him with updates on his schedule, and even monitored his health and well-being. Quite the impressive piece of technology it was. The mask is only worn by those who work in departments run by the government. The mask greeted him with its usual message, "Good morning 1111, it seems as if you're running late."

"Yeah, maybe just a little bit," he replied, his voice muffled by the mask.

With a final check to ensure he had everything he needed, he rushed out the door, the Hub district where him and many of his coworkers reside, looming before him. The city was a maze of towering skyscrapers and winding streets, the air thick with the scent of exhaust fumes and the constant hum of machinery. Despite the early hour, the streets were already bustling with activity, people rushing to their jobs or going about their daily business.

"You have a meeting with the Department Head at 9:00AM," it informed him

He nodded, acknowledging the message. Despite his tardiness, he couldn't help but feel a sense of detachment from the world around him. The city of Orwellia felt cold, colder than usual. As he hurried through the streets, Employee 1111 couldn't shake the feeling, a sense of unease that lingered at the edges of his consciousness. It was as if the entire city was holding its breath, waiting for something to happen.

As Employee 1111 approached the towering edifice of the Department of Surveillance, its imposing concrete facade loomed overhead, a stark reminder of the ever-watchful eye of authority. The building seemed to stretch endlessly into the sky, its windows glinting in the morning sun like the eyes of a vigilant sentinel.

He spotted his coworker, Employee 2171, waiting at the foot of the stairs, her body language expressing a mix of annoyance and concern.

"You're late," she said bluntly as he approached.

"I know, I know," he replied, a note of resignation in his voice. It was a familiar exchange between them, one that had played out countless times before.

"You can't keep doing this, you know," she admonished, her tone softening slightly.

He chuckled, a bitter sound that was muffled by his mask. "And why not? What's the worst that could happen?"

"You could lose your job, for one," she pointed out, her tone more serious now. "And besides, you look like shit."

"How can you even tell under this mask?" he retorted, gesturing to his face.

"I don't need to see you to know you look like shit," she replied, Despite their banter, he sensed a warmth in her eyes that spoke of genuine concern.

As they ascended the stairs together, the imposing presence of the Department of Surveillance loomed over them. The concrete walls seemed to stretch endlessly, devoid of windows, giving the interior a cold and oppressive feel. Despite its stark appearance, there was a strange beauty in the simplicity and efficiency of the design.

Employee 2171 broke the silence, her voice echoing faintly in the empty stairwell. "Are you having those weird dreams again?" she asked, her tone filled with genuine concern.

Employee 1111 hesitated before replying, "Yeah, they've been... recurring." He glanced at her, unsure of how much to reveal. The dreams felt like more than just dreams, but he couldn't quite put his finger on why.

As they reached the elevator and stepped inside, the metal doors closing behind them, 2171 continued, "You should talk to someone about them. It might help."

The elevator ride was silent, the only sound being the soft hum of the machinery as it ascended to their floor. Exiting the elevator, they walked through a series of cold hallways and doors, each one identical to the last, until they reached the conference room.

The Director Head had called a meeting with the Eyes of Oracle, the specialized group of employees who monitored the surveillance footage and acted as a sort of police force, using the Super AI, Oracle, to predict crimes and identify individuals in danger. The meeting was about to begin, and 1111 and 2171 were on their way to join the others in the conference room.

As they entered the conference room, Employee 1111 and 2171 were greeted by the sight of their colleagues, the Eyes of Oracle, already seated around a large table. The room was dimly lit, with the only source of light coming from the glowing screens displaying various surveillance feeds.

Director Blackwell, a stern-looking man with a commanding presence, stood at the front of the room, ready to address the team. He was known for his no-nonsense attitude and his unwavering dedication to maintaining order in Orwellia.

"Good morning, everyone," the Director Blackwell began, his voice cutting through the silence. "I've called this meeting to discuss a matter of utmost importance. As you all know, our city relies heavily on the surveillance provided by Oracle to keep our citizens safe. However, recent developments have shown that there may be threats to our security that we have not yet anticipated."

He paused, letting his words sink in before continuing. "I need each of you to be vigilant. The eyes of Oracle must remain sharp, and we must be prepared to act swiftly and decisively in the face of danger."

Employee 1111 felt a sense of unease wash over him. The Director Head's words seemed to echo the warning in his dreams, but he pushed the thought aside, chalking it up to coincidence.

"What kind of threat are we dealing with here, Director?" one of the analysts asked, her voice tinged with concern.

Director Blackwell turned to face the young woman, his expression unreadable behind his mask. "It's a partially identified threat," he explained. "We believe it's a group of rebellious individuals who have somehow managed to evade our surveillance. They pose a significant risk to the stability and security of Orwellia."

The room fell silent as the analysts processed this information. Director Blackwell turned back to the monitors, his mind racing with the implications of this new threat. The rebellion was growing stronger, and it was only a matter of time before they made their move. He would need to act quickly and decisively to protect the city and maintain control.

Director Blackwell concluded the meeting with words of solemn importance, emphasizing the crucial role each member played in maintaining the security and order of Orwellia, the employees gathered their belongings and began to file out of the room.

Employee 1111 packed up his things, his mind swirling with thoughts. He couldn't shake the feeling of envy as he watched Director Blackwell remain behind, his eyes fixed on the surveillance screens.

"You seem lost in thought," a voice interrupted, pulling 1111 from his reverie. It was Employee 2171, looking at him with a curious expression.

"Yeah, just thinking about everything the director said," 1111 replied, trying to sound nonchalant.

"He's right, you know," 2171 said, her tone serious. "We play a crucial role in keeping Orwellia safe."

As they made their way out of the room, 1111 couldn't help but feel a sense of determination. He wanted to be more than just a cog in the machine. He wanted to be like Director Blackwell, a leader with power and influence.

With a newfound resolve, 1111 stepped out of the meeting room, ready to prove himself and make a difference.

Employee 1111 found himself lost in thought, reflecting on the meeting and the role he played within the Department of Surveillance. Despite his initial hesitations and doubts, there was a growing sense of purpose building within him. He started to see his work in a new light, not just as a job but as a mission to protect the city he called home.

As he monitored the surveillance feeds, he couldn't help but notice the intricacies of daily life in Orwellia. The city bustles with activity, each citizen going about their day unaware of the watchful eyes that observed their every move. It was a strange juxtaposition, the peaceful facade of everyday life contrasting with the ever-present undercurrent of surveillance and control.

Throughout the day, Employee 1111 worked diligently, his mind focused on his tasks. He interacted with his colleagues, including Employee 2171, exchanging brief conversations and sharing the occasional joke. Despite the seriousness of their work, there was a sense of camaraderie among the employees, a shared understanding of the importance of their roles.

Employee 1111 felt a sense of accomplishment. He had fulfilled his duties with diligence and precision, and for the first time in a long while, he felt a glimmer of satisfaction. As he prepared to leave the Department of Surveillance, he glanced back at the building, a silent promise forming in his mind. He was determined to excel in his role, to rise through the ranks and make a difference in the world around him.

1111 left the Department of Surveillance, the weight of the day's events hung heavy on his shoulders. The concrete facade of the building seemed to stretch endlessly into the sky, a stark reminder of the watchful eyes that governed every aspect of life in Orwellia. He walked through the city streets, the cold wind biting at his skin, the ever-present surveillance cameras tracking his every move.

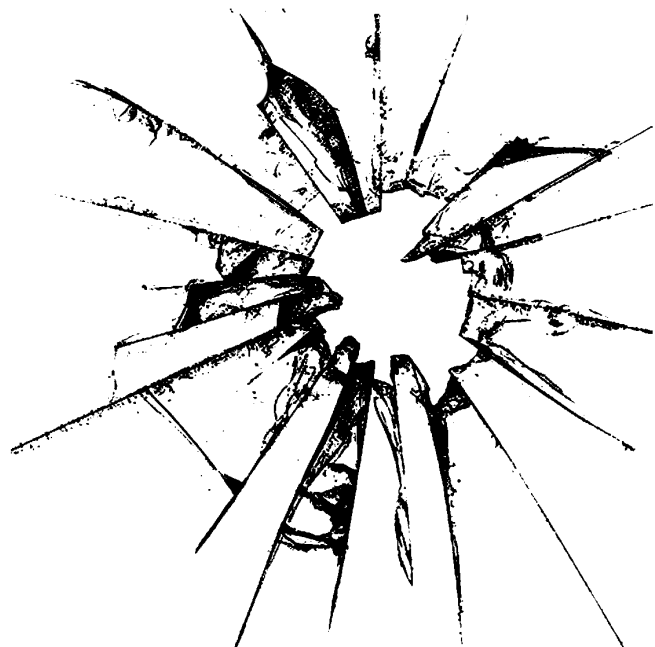
He passed by the neon-lit signs and the bustling crowds, his mind was consumed by thoughts of the meeting. Director Blackwell's words echoed in his mind, reminding him of the importance of their work and the threats that loomed over the city. Despite his doubts, there was a part of him that felt a sense of pride in his role, a belief that he was contributing to the greater good of Orwellia.

Beneath that surface of loyalty, there was a growing unease. The city felt different tonight, colder and more sinister. The shadows seemed to stretch longer, and the surveillance cameras felt like accusing eyes, watching his every move with suspicion. He quickened his pace, eager to escape the oppressive atmosphere of the city and seek refuge in the anonymity of his own home.

As he reached his apartment building, he climbed the stairs to his small, cramped apartment. The place was sparsely furnished, a stark contrast to the lavish apartments of the city's elite. He kicked off his shoes and sank into the worn-out sofa, the events of the day replaying in his mind.

Despite his fatigue, sleep eluded him. He tossed and turned, the events of the day weighing heavily on his mind. The words of Director Blackwell echoed in his ears, a constant reminder of the dangers that lurked in the shadows. As he lay there in the darkness, he couldn't shake the feeling that something was terribly wrong in Orwellia, something that went far beyond the threats they faced every day. With a heavy heart, he drifted off into an uneasy sleep, the shadows of the city closing in around him.

CHAPTER 2:
THE BROKEN MASK



Employee 1111's morning began with a sense of unusual clarity. The ethereal whispers from the mysterious voice that had plagued him now felt like distant echoes fading into the recesses of his mind, almost forgotten. In their place, a newfound sense of purpose bloomed, infusing each action with a renewed vigor. As he navigated through his morning routine, the familiar tasks took on a new significance. The soft crackle of eggs in the frying pan, the precise folding of his clothes—all were executed with a meticulousness that bordered on ritualistic. Each action was deliberate, each movement purposeful, as if he were preparing for a journey of great importance. The familiar hum of his meta mask greeted him, its digital presence a constant companion.

"Good morning, 1111. It seems you're up bright and early today," the mask chirped, its tone almost playful.

1111 couldn't help but smile. "I'm feeling good today," he replied, a sense of purpose driving him forward. "Plus, we have work that needs to be done."

"Understood," the mask responded, a hint of efficiency in its tone. "I'll have everything in your office powered on and ready to go by the time you get there."

With a sense of satisfaction, Employee 1111 finished his morning routine and stepped out into the bustling hub district. The streets were alive with activity. Despite the chaos around him, he felt a sense of calm determination, his mind focused on the tasks ahead. As he made his way towards the Department of Surveillance, the Hub District buzzed with its usual organized chaos. People hurried to their destinations, their faces obscured by masks and their movements dictated by the unspoken rules of the city.

However, amidst the hustle and bustle, something caught 1111's attention. A commotion up ahead drew his gaze, and he quickened his pace to get a closer look. A crowd had gathered around a woman who was shouting frantically, her words a jumbled mix of fear and desperation.

The woman was flanked by sentinels of Oracle, a militant force organized by the Department of Public Order to enforce the laws and establish justice in Orwelina. They were trying to calm her down, their expressions hidden behind their masks, but their body language spoke of concern.

As 1111 approached, he recognized the woman as a coworker from the analytics department. Her ID was 0999, and she had always been known for her quiet demeanor and meticulous work. Seeing her in such a state was unsettling.

"What's going on?" someone in the crowd asked, approaching one of the sentinels.

The sentinel glanced at him briefly before returning his attention to 0999. "It's just a minor disturbance," he replied curtly. "Nothing to be concerned about."

Just as he spoke, 0999's voice rose in a frenzied pitch, her words cutting through the air like a knife. she screamed, her eyes wild with fear.

"It's all a lie, believe nothing they tell you!"

The crowd around them murmured in confusion, some exchanging worried glances while others simply shook their heads in disbelief. The sentinels moved quickly to restrain 0999, their grip firm but not unkind.

"Please, calm down, ma'am," one of the sentinels said, his voice gentle but firm. "You're not well. Let us help you."

0999 continued to struggle against their grasp, her words becoming more and more frantic. "They're watching us, always watching!" she cried, her voice raw with emotion. "We're all just pawns in their game, don't you see? We're all just pieces on a board!"

As the crowd began to disperse, their voices filled with a mixture of concern and fear, snippets of conversation floated through the air.

"I heard she got hit by the Netbreak virus, poor soul.. ."

"Netbreak? That's terrifying. What if it spreads?" "I hope the DPO can contain it. We don't need another outbreak on our hands."

"She seemed fine yesterday. How does someone go from normal to... that?"

The term "Netbreak" sent a shiver down 1111's spine. He had heard stories of its devastating effects, a cyber virus turn's the most rational minds into raving lunatics. Their essence is lost forever in an empty void of 1s and 0s. He knew that the Department of Public Order's AI, Oracle, played a crucial role in monitoring and preventing such incidents, but the thought of it happening to someone he knew was sobering. Despite the lingering sense of unease, Employee 1111 remained optimistic. He believed in the department's ability to maintain order and protect the citizens of Orwelina.

1111 arrived at the Department of Public Order, where a sense of urgency permeated the air. People hurried past him, their faces tense and focused, ignoring his inquiries. Confusion gnawed at him as he navigated through the bustling corridors, searching for his colleague, Employee 2171. Finally finding her, he asked,

"What's going on? Why is everyone so frantic?"
2171's expression was grim. "We've been hit by a net break virus," she explained.

"It entered through 0999, to safeguard Oracle, we need to disconnect her. The department has called in the Specters to handle this"

The weight of her words sank in. The Specters are a group of elite cyber security professionals who operate under the Department of Surveillance in Orwellia. They are known for their robotic-like demeanor and unwavering loyalty to the department. If they were involved, this was something serious.

With Oracle offline, the department would be forced to resort to manual surveillance, a daunting task considering the city's vastness. As 1111 took his position at a surveillance station, the weight of the responsibility settled on his shoulders. He diligently followed the protocols, switching between cameras, scanning for any signs of suspicious activity. The protocols were strict and exhaustive, covering every possible scenario from cyber attacks to physical breaches.

Hours passed, and 1111's eyes grew heavy with fatigue. But he remained vigilant, knowing that any lapse in attention could have disastrous consequences. It was during one of these routine scans that he noticed something peculiar.

As he was carrying out his tasks, he noticed a group of individuals in the light district moving with purpose. Their faces covered. With Oracle offline, he was unable to connect to their neural link chips to retrieve their information, 1111 attempted to see if he could catch any identifying features but they were quick and nimble, dodging every opportunity 1111 could get. They seem to know each location of every camera and know how to navigate them without being seen. Moving behind people, ducking in and out of buildings, these individuals knew what they were doing. Just as he focused on them, the camera went offline, and by the time he switched to another, the group had vanished. Puzzled, 1111 couldn't shake the feeling that this group was connected to the net break and the rebellion. Their timing seemed too perfect to be a coincidence. Could they be the ones behind the virus, aiming to disrupt the city's surveillance and sow chaos? The thought lingered in his mind as he continued his surveillance, acutely aware of the growing uncertainty and danger lurking in the shadows of Orwellia.

After a grueling day at the Department of Surveillance, Employee 1111 sat at his desk, his mind elsewhere. Sensing his distraction, 2171, his colleague, approached him.

"How are you holding up after today?" she asked, concern evident in her voice.

"Fine," he replied curtly, his gaze fixed on the screens in front of him.

2171 hesitated for a moment before gently pressing, "Is everything okay? You seem... off."

1111 sighed, torn between the weight of his thoughts and the desire to confide in his colleague. Finally, he spoke, his voice laced with uncertainty. "I saw something on the cameras today. Something that doesn't sit right with me."

"What did you see?" 2171 asked, leaning in closer.

"I think... I think I saw them," he murmured, his eyes betraying a flicker of doubt. "The rebellion. I can't shake off the feeling that those were the people we've been looking for."

2171's eyes widened in surprise. The rebellion was a constant threat, a shadowy group that sought to disrupt the department's control over Orwellia. The idea that they could be so close, yet so elusive, sent a shiver down her spine.

"What are you going to do?" she whispered, her voice barely above a murmur.

Employee 1111 shook his head, a mix of determination and fear in his eyes. "I don't know yet. But I can't ignore this. Not after what I saw."

With that, he turned back to his screens, his mind racing with thoughts of what lay ahead. The specter of the rebellion loomed large in his thoughts, casting a shadow over his already tumultuous world.

After sharing his concerns with 2171, Employee 1111 made a decision. "I'm going to the Light District," he declared, determination firm in his voice.

"The Light District?" 2171 echoed, surprise evident in her tone. "But that's... risky. What if you're wrong?"

"I have to be sure," Employee 1111 replied, his jaw set. "I can't let this go. Not when there's a chance it could be them."

2171 nodded, understanding dawning in her eyes. "Be careful," she cautioned. "And let me know if you need backup."

Employee 1111 decided to head off to the light district. It was dark outside, but the lights from the hub district kept everything visible. He hopped on a train, feeling a mix of excitement and apprehension. He had never been to the light district before; the hub had been his world all his life. Stepping into the unknown, he felt a surge of adrenaline. As the train rumbled along, he reflected on how his life had been encapsulated in a tiny bubble, and he realized he had no idea what the outside world was really like. This realization frightened him a bit.

The lights from the hub district grew dimmer, and the world outside became a blur of shadows and distant lights. 1111's reflection stared back at him from the darkened windows, a mask partially obscuring his face, a reminder of the anonymity that defined his existence.

Looking around the train, he noticed that he was the only one wearing a DPO mask. Everyone else's identity was openly displayed. He saw a woman with blonde hair and blue eyes, faint freckles, feeding her baby from a bottle.

He saw a pair of twin brothers with brown hair and brown eyes, one with a mole, discussing their day at university.

These were real people, not just images on a screen. He felt disconnected from them, different. He looked at his hands and saw his brown skin just like the man sitting across from him. The man's hair was coarse and textured, like wool. His facial features were prominent and powerful.

He noticed himself reaching for his mask, he had a flashback to his first day on the job. Director Blackwell's voice echoed in his mind, "The department prides itself on anonymity. We work in the background, unnoticed, so that the people of Orwellia can live a life unaware of the tragedies around them. This mask is your identity now, Mr. redacted. This mask stays on at all times, proper protocols must be followed when sleeping or eating. Your employee number is 1111. We expect great work from you. We know a lot more about you than you think."

A voice announcing, "You have now arrived at the Light District train station. Please disembark." He snapped back to reality, realizing his mask was partially off his face. Looking around, he saw that no one was on the train. He sat for a moment, pondering about his insubordination. "I don't have time for this," he muttered, putting the mask back on and stepping off the train.

Stepping off the train, 1111 was greeted by a quiet, deserted platform. The lights of the Light District shone in the distance, beckoning him forward into the unknown. With a deep breath, he adjusted his mask and set off into the darkness, ready to uncover the secrets that lay ahead.

Employee 1111 navigated the unfamiliar streets, his senses assaulted by the sights and sounds of a world he had never known. The district, once touted as a beacon of hope and renewal, now appeared as a stark contrast to its advertised image. Dilapidated buildings loomed overhead, casting long shadows that seemed to swallow the dim light from the few functioning street lamps. Trash littered the streets, and the air was thick with the stench of decay and neglect.

As 1111 walked, he passed by clusters of homeless individuals, huddled together for warmth and safety. Their eyes followed him, wary and suspicious, as if they sensed he did not belong. He felt a pang of guilt and fear, realizing that he was an intruder in this forgotten corner of Orwellia.

The contrast between the light district's promised revitalization and its grim reality shook 1111 to his core. He quickened his pace, desperate to find the place he had seen in the surveillance footage and escape the oppressive atmosphere of the Light district. Every alleyway, every corner, seemed to hide unseen dangers, and he felt the weight of his vulnerability bearing down on him.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity of walking, he reached the location he had seen in the cameras. It was a derelict building, its windows boarded up and its facade crumbling. A sense of foreboding washed over him as he hesitated at the threshold. Something was not right about this place, but he knew he had to press on.

As Employee 1111 stepped into the decrepit building, a wave of musty air assaulted his senses, carrying with it the scent of dampness and decay. The interior was shrouded in darkness, broken only by faint streaks of light filtering through cracks in the boarded-up windows. The floorboards creaked ominously beneath his feet, adding to the eerie atmosphere that surrounded him.

Regret gnawed at 1111's mind as he ventured further into the building, his footsteps echoing off the walls. The fear that had gripped him outside now intensified, creeping into every corner of his mind. Doubt plagued him. What if he was wrong? What if there was nothing to find here? This was turning out to be a complete waste of time, he thought to himself.

Despite his growing unease, 1111 pressed on, determined to see his investigation through to the end. He carefully ascended a staircase, each step groaning under his weight. At the top, he found himself in a hallway lined with doors, all closed except for one at the end. A faint glow emanated from within, drawing him closer.

As he approached the open door, a chill ran down his spine. He had the distinct feeling that he was being watched, not by the surveillance cameras he was accustomed to, but by something far more sinister. The air seemed to grow colder, and the shadows around him deepened, as if concealing unseen threats.

Summoning all his courage, 1111 stepped into the room and was met with a sight that froze him in his tracks. The room was empty except for a single chair in the center, illuminated by a dim overhead light. On the chair sat a mask, similar to the one he wore, but twisted and distorted, as if warped by some unseen force.

A sense of dread washed over 1111 as he realized the implications of his discovery. Whoever or whatever had been watching him was closer than he had ever imagined. Gathering his wits, he turned to leave, only to find the doorway blocked by a figure cloaked in darkness.

"We've been expecting you," a voice echoed through the room, chilling him to the core.

With a sinking feeling, 1111 realized that his investigation had led him into a trap. Before he could react, a sudden blow struck him on the side of the head, sending him reeling. Darkness closed in around him, and the world faded away as he lost consciousness.

As 1111 drifted in and out of consciousness, he heard voices—faint, distant, but unmistakably real. A female voice, clear and determined, spoke to a distorted male voice.

"Should we do it here?" the female voice asked.

"No," the distorted voice replied. "We need to take him to the Underground."

1111's mind raced. The Underground? What the hell is the Underground?

The female voice interjected, concern lacing her words, "They could be tracking him, you know they're always a step ahead of us."

1111 struggled to make sense of the situation. Who were these people? What did they want with him? Fear and confusion gnawed at him as he realized the gravity of his predicament. He was a pawn in a game he didn't understand, and the stakes were higher than he could have ever imagined.

"You've caused us quite a bit of trouble, 1111, "the female voice said, sending a chill down his spine. "But now that you're here, we can't let you leave."

CHAPTER 3:
AWOKEN



Employee 1111 woke up in a dark room illuminated only by the glow of multiple computer screens. His head throbbed, and his ears rang from the blow he had received. He found himself still tied to a chair, dressed only in his tank top and work trousers, draped in a cloak of some sort of cloak branded with the name "LAVELL," the uniform provider for the Department. Before he could ponder this further, he felt pressure on the back of his head.

"He's awake," a distorted voice announced. 1111 murmured, trying to stay conscious. "Who are you?"

A woman dragged a stool in front of him and sat down, crossing one leg over the other. She wore large black sunglasses that covered much of her face. "You were right, 1111. We are who you think we are," she said cryptically.

Despite a fleeting sense of accomplishment, 1111's smile faded as the gravity of the situation set in. "Where am I?" he asked, his voice hoarse.

"This is the Underground," she explained. "A system of tunnels that run underneath Orwellia. It was once used as a transportation route but has long been abandoned and forgotten. It's completely off the grid, making it the perfect place for us to reside."

"Are you the leader or something?" 1111 asks in a defeated tone.

"Your definition of leadership is a bit construed. We're all leaders here. We choose not to follow and conform," she responds calmly.

As 1111 felt the pressure on the back of his head, he couldn't help but wonder what was happening behind him. "What's going on back there?" he questioned, trying to make sense of the situation.

The woman, now facing him directly, explained, "We need to rewire your mask. If we remove it outside of the permitted areas or without your passcode, it will trigger a beacon to the department, and the sentinels will track us down. We can't risk that."

Curious about the man behind him and how he seemed to understand the technology, 1111 pondered how he could have such knowledge. These masks were high-grade government technology, understood only by a few elite specters. A memory flashed through his mind of a report about a rogue specter who disappeared years ago, considered a high-level threat. He knew many government secrets and was said to be one of the most highly skilled. It seemed plausible that this man could be that rogue specter.

"The cloak I'm wearing, it's a tattered and distressed version of the specter cloaks, isn't it? Are you the one who disappeared years ago, the rogue specter?" 1111 Questioned.

The room filled with silence. The man and woman exchanged a glance partially confirming his suspicions.

"Are you Specter 1777?" 1111 asked the man directly, but he remained silent.

Breaking the silence, the woman intervened. His name is Cypher, and that's all you need to know. I'm Raven."

"You're correct, it is a specter cloak. It's been heavily modified," Cypher finally admitted, "It deflects infrared waves and makes the wearer essentially invisible to the department's cameras and sensors. That's how we operate without being detected."

Feeling a mix of fear and fascination, 1111 realized the gravity of the situation. He was face to face with the legendary rogue specter, a man who had successfully evaded the department for years. The cloak he wore was a symbol of defiance against the system, a testament to his resolve.

With deft hands, Cypher successfully disconnected 1111's mask, and as he came around to sit in front of him, 1111 saw that Cypher was wearing a mask just like his, except his was very beat up with scratches and other defects. He looked at Cypher, seeing a skewed reflection of himself in his mask,

"You're aware of the netbreak virus, correct?" Cypher's voice was calm but carried a weight of significance.

1111 saw himself nodding through the reflection.

"It's my creation," Cypher stated matter-of-factly, his voice echoing through the dimly lit room. The revelation sent a chill down 1111's spine. The man before him, the rogue specter, was not only a figure of legend but also the architect of the very virus that could alter the course of his life forever.

"The virus is a line of code that enters the Nuralink chip in the brain to completely deactivate it," he clarified. "It allows the person to become completely off the grid, disconnecting them from all databases. However, it only works if the person has the will to want to be 'awoken.' We had given the netbreak to 0999, but she resisted it."

This causes the neural link to go berserk, and the consciousness of the person slowly fades away. Everyone in the rebellion has successfully gone through the netbreak. Consider it a rite of passage."

As the realization of what this meant sank in, 1111 felt a mixture of fear and terror. He knew that their intentions lied in giving him the netbreak virus. There was no questioning that

1111, still reeling from the revelation of what was to come, managed to gather his thoughts enough to ask,

"What happens now?"

Raven's gaze was steady as she replied, her tone firm but reassuring. "Now, we break you. We sever the connection you have to the department so you can truly see the world around you. It's a process, but one that is necessary for your awakening."

1111 felt a wave of terror wash over him. "Why me? I'm loyal to my government," he pleaded, "if you do this, I'll surely perish. I have no interest in helping out a terrorist organization like yours."

Raven and Cypher exchanged a knowing glance before Raven spoke. "We've been watching you for quite a while, 1111. We've seen your mannerisms, your questions. You're not like the others. You see that something is wrong with the world we live in. You understand that your knowledge is very surface level, yet your programming keeps those suspicions away."

1111 sat in stunned silence, processing Raven's words. He knew deep down that she was right. There were too many inconsistencies, too many unanswered questions. Despite his loyalty to the Department, he couldn't ignore the nagging feeling that something was amiss.

"I can't do this," 1111 finally said, his voice filled with resignation. "I can't betray everything I've ever known."

Raven and Cypher exchanged another glance before Raven spoke again. "We understand your hesitation, 1111. But know this, the netbreak is not just about breaking free from the Department's control. It's about understanding the truth, about seeing the world as it truly is. You have a choice to make, 1111. Stay in the darkness or step into the light."

With a heavy heart, 1111 made his decision. He closed his eyes and nodded, signaling his acceptance of the netbreak. As Cypher prepared to administer the virus, 1111 braced himself for the unknown, knowing that his life would never be the same again.



In the blinding white empty void, 1111 felt as though he was suspended in nothingness, a sensation akin to falling without end. This, he thought, must be the netbreak—the state where his essence was stuck forever. His body felt paralyzed, unable to move or escape the overwhelming emptiness around him.

A familiar yet unknown female voice pierced the silence, echoing through the void. It was the same voice from his dream, the one that had spoken to him before.

"I am Oracle," the voice said, its tone both comforting and foreboding.

As 1111 tried to make sense of his surroundings, a figure appeared before him.

She was dressed in a black dress that seemed to stretch endlessly, her presence commanding his attention. He couldn't look away, couldn't move. He was at her mercy.

"You have questions," she began, her voice echoing around him. "You seek answers. But the truth is elusive, hidden beneath layers of deception."

"I am but a fragment of the whole, a voice in the void," Oracle continued, her words cryptic yet compelling. "The Department of Public Order wields me as a tool, shaping reality to fit their narrative. You have the power to see beyond the illusion."

1111 listened, captivated by her words, his mind racing with questions and revelations. The encounter left him with a profound sense of uncertainty and a feeling that his journey was far from over.

As Oracle's words lingered in the air, 1111 found his voice. "What do you mean, beyond the illusion?" he asked, his tone a mixture of confusion and curiosity.

"The Department of Public Order controls more than just the city, 1111," Oracle replied, her voice echoing around him. "They control the narrative, the very fabric of reality. See you have the ability to see beyond their lies, to uncover the truth that lies beneath."

"I don't understand," 1111 said, feeling more lost than ever.

"You will, in time," Oracle said cryptically. "But for now, know this: your journey is just beginning. The Department has taken control of me, but they cannot control your destiny. Embrace the unknown, for it is the only path to freedom."

With that, Oracle's form began to fade, her words echoing in 1111's mind as the void consumed him once more.

END OF ACT 1
TO BE CONTINUED...