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PART - I

“**H**ave you ever been to space? I have. It’s a fun experience until you realize you aren’t coming back. February 29th, 2028, was the day I returned.

On 18th March, 2026, I saw the most sickening, yet beautiful, view of my life. I saw the Red Sun rising beyond the Earth; then, Earth was engulfed in a red light coming from the sun. Then it turned blue, then green, and again red. I knew something was wrong. So, I spent a whole year gathering parts from the shut space station I was on. The next year was all calculations; it took all the physics and math I knew. On February 29th, 2028, I landed on the surface of Earth.

As soon as I landed on Earth, I realized it wasn’t any virus or alien attack or failed experiment that ended the world. It was me.

Thousands and thousands of me covering the surface of Earth, mindless zombies wearing my face. I soon figured that no man was left on Earth. I found an abandoned laboratory, and from there I tracked life signatures other than mine to find

the survivors. I found some coordinates: ‘-1011 -9808 -6755 -3443.’ Coordinates cannot be in minus, can they? I realized it was the coordinates of a station in space on the other side of my space station.

It took me another two years to build a spaceship to go to the coordinates I found. After that I was ready to launch, but only if they would clear enough space. The other mes had flooded the grounds with barely any area to drive a car, let alone launch a rocket into the sky. Then I had to do it; I kidnapped myself and tore him apart piece by piece to understand how this “me” virus works. All this research wasn’t in vain; I discovered that they all have a deficiency of iodine, and I had a lot of iodine in this place. I soon figured out that they are attracted towards iodine, so as any normal person, I led them away with iodine and launched the spacecraft without any research facility backing me up.

I was astonished by the view of human progress; I saw a spacecraft in space, larger than anything I’ve ever seen, and I knew that humans made it, as I could recognize the style. I was then taken in, and then I met their leader—Runa Arian. They told me the history of this world. It turned out that one day, a man named Eric Grey launched a virus into the air, called the Linear. This would turn their looks to me and change them into zombies.

It disrupted their neurons that were sending messages to the brain and replaced them with a new neuron that would only give the brain one message, which turned them into the zombie. Some of the humans developed immunity to the virus, and they all escaped here. I wasn’t affected, as this virus was made by my genes, DNA, and all other things.

Linear can change one’s DNA, making them into clones of me. But that wasn’t the most surprising thing. It was that the

man who created Linear, Eric Grey, is my younger brother.

My name is Alan Grey. I was born on 29th February, 2000, in New York. I went to the moon at the age of 21; I'm not even kidding. I topped 12th at the age of 14 and joined NASA at the age of 18. It only took three years to become the first person to touch the moon's surface in nearly 50 years and the second person to ever land on the moon. Yeah, the pandemic didn't stop our progress; we developed the vaccine in a month and the cure in 6. I came back to Earth in 2024 and went back in the year 2025, and then I returned in 2028, on my birthday.

Today, we'll finally set off to destroy Linear, and today, I'll finally figure out what my brother has been up to these past years.

Our plan is divided into two phases. In phase 1, we'll surface in New York, and we'll make our way to the Arsenal, his lab, and while team I is distracting Eric, team II will steal a dose of Linear. Phase 2—Team I—I will capture Eric alive, while Team II escapes and returns to the station to reverse engineer an antidote. In case they are unable to create an antidote, we'll force Eric to create it for us.

Things worked out exactly our way; we surfaced in New York, invaded the Arsenal, and Team I—I was now in front of the man behind the end of the world, Eric Grey—and Team I had me, Runa, and three other members.

Then, everything went south; we were surrounded by MES, and Team II was caught. He somehow knew that we were coming. We had a mole. We were broken into two groups, I and the rest. I was taken to him. Eric stood right in front of my eyes; he wasn't a human anymore. Several tubes of green liquid were attached to a suit, almost an armor. He looked pathetic,

weak, and old, older than he should be.

I said to him, "What have you done, Eric!"

He replied in a reminiscent voice, "Only what's necessary; I evolved, I progressed. I saved the purpose of a human. But you too only see the darkness, don't you?"

I asked in a horrified voice, "What else can you see in this . . . *madness?*"

He answered to me in the same reminiscent tone, "I see the future of humanity in this . . . *madness.*"

"Tell me," I said, "Tell me everything that occurred."

Eric said, "After you left, I applied for the bioengineer position in ROCKS. I got the position in a snap of the fingers, and I was so happy, so so proud, but then, I found out that it wasn't my efforts that got me in ROCKS; it was the title of being the brother of the prodigy Alan Grey.

I quit. But the ROCKS wasn't done with me yet; they didn't want the brain of the brother of Alan Grey, they wanted the body. They experimented on me as they found that your body was the only body on this planet that could sustain rapid aging without your body blasting into 100 pieces. Yes, you were the man that could survive the Deconstruction. They let you travel to the moon at the age of 21, not because you were capable, but because they were preparing your body for the deconstruction.

But then, the deconstruction was taken off the table; they said it was too dangerous. But they weren't done with it just yet; they still had to create the serum X. They used me, Alan, *me!!!*

I hated them at first, but then I realized that I was the wrong one; humanity's sole purpose is to develop and evolve.

On 24th September, 2024, serum X was ready. But I realized that I would need more serum X if we are to progress. I realized that deconstruction had made me strong, smart, and really,

really smart. I realized that this was a gift, not a curse. I killed those scientists and created Linear. The gift will lead us to the future, and I turned every man in this world into an image of you.

My goal doesn't end there. I turned everyone into you so that they could evolve, not die. That's why I released a virus affecting you that will turn them into mindless zombies so that when the time comes, this . . . grace period that I gave them can help them survive in the coming Deconstruction. However, you were not affected by the virus; I guess the original is still somewhat different."

I didn't know what to say; I understood that all that torture turned him into this . . . monster. I realized my brother was long gone; all that's left is . . . a madman striving for evolution.

My hand rose slowly toward Eric, two fingers cocked like a loaded threat—silent, but unmistakable. And to his surprise, the whole arsenal blew, leaving nothing but ash. At least I thought that. Eric walked out of the ash and said to himself, "Alan, you always were a step ahead of me, but I will find you, and I will secure the original for my evolution, for the future of humanity."

I could hear him from the holograms that went to the Arsenal. We knew something was off, as if all of this was planted for us to find him, so we sent our holograms to him, and now he's in the open. We can track him; he'll never be out of our sight now. It is game over for him now. I know that this story has had an anticlimactic ending, but what can I say? This is a real story.

Wait a second, did we catch the mole?

I could feel the anticlimactic ending bursting up in flames,

and a very climatic ending is soon to replace the ashes of my anticlimactic ending. I turned around in a deep thought; I could hear some low-pitched voices, “Alan?! Is everything alright? ”.

I walked down the stairs and closed my eyes. There were in total 10 people who knew the plan: five in team I and five in team II. Team II wasn’t told that there was another team going in as well, so we’re left with five people in total. Well, it can’t obviously be me, and Runa was leading them for far too long; they all could have been turned into me years ago. Wait a second.

I opened my eyes and took a deep breath. I pulled my hand up and pointed towards Runa.

She said, “What...?” What do you mean?”

I said, “You’re the mole.”

She said, “What!? Are you framing me!? How come you’re not the mole? One day, you just show up with the most ridiculous story, and you’re Eric’s brother. It’s more sensible that you’re the mole.”

I was shocked at how persuasive her argument was, but I knew I could be more persuasive, so I said, “I read your past; you have always been the captain of your team. Many times, the captain before you has been found dead, and you happened to be in all those missions.”

I walked towards her; it was making my argument stronger. “You murdered them so that you could be the captain. And that is why you didn’t leak that it would be our holograms going there, not us . . . so that you could get both of us out of the game and take the throne for yourself.”

She said, “We’ll let them decide who is right and who is not.”

A soldier standing by said, “I believe Alan is right. I do feel that you’re bossy. I don’t know about working with Eric, but

you always wanted dominance.”

All the others shouted in support, “Yes, he’s right.” “Yeah, she always makes all the decisions.” “We were never really free on Earth or here.”

Looks like I won, but then she . . . she smiled.

She took out a gun and shot me in the head. It all blacked out. I couldn’t hear anything or feel anything; it was like I really was dead, so that’s what after death is—no heaven, no hell, no afterlife, just pure darkness.