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Project Paragon
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Chapter 1: Project Lazarus

Dim, blue light emitted from corners of adjoining walls, enshrouds a grey and sterile room. A body lies, motionless, under a plain white sheet atop a cold, metallic table at the center of the room. The sound of white noise and the stillness of the hard, cement walls and floor are all that accompany the blue light and the person lying atop the table. The sound of the white noise becomes haunting as the tone and frequency decrease, steadily. What was once a barely noticeable sound is now nearly a menacing growl. The table rattles from the vibration, the body remains still. The blue light dims and flickers, as if the room itself is losing consciousness and being placed into a trance by the hum.

The tone and frequency of the sound begins to increase, as if they had been wound up and let go, rocketing to the opposite ends of their spectrums. The hum becomes a whir and then a ringing. The brilliance of the blue light also peaks along with the sound. There is a bright flash, and then darkness, silence. The light slowly returns dim and blue. The body atop the table is gone.

The sheet that once covered the table is strewn across the floor in the direction of the rear, left corner of the room. In the corner there stands a man in a hospital gown. His arms are outstretched, clutching the walls on either side of him. His eyes are wide as they scan the room in confusion. He keeps his eyes scanning every detail of the room, as if waiting for something to happen. The reflection of the opposite corner of the room gains his attention. A long mirror, obviously two-way glass, stretches across the wall in front of him. He approaches it, slinking slowly towards it. His body feels heavy and breathing seems... different.

In front of the mirror he examines his face. The face is familiar but, somehow, different. A few extra scars, and the texture seems off a bit. He brushes his left hand

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across his face, as if in an attempt to wake up. He recognizes his face, but can't recall the name attached to it. His mind is fog of information, all of it swirling around, as if dust waiting to settle. He notices a nametag on the left chest of his gown in the reflection. He looks down at the tag.

“A-R-E-S”

His eyes return to the mirror. His gaze transitions, from looking at his reflection, to trying to look through it. He can hear motion and the muffled sound of voices behind the mirror. He reels back as his vision actually penetrates the reflective surface for a moment, catching him off guard. He noticed several armed people in military uniforms unlike any he's ever seen. He catches his balance.

“I must have been captured,” he thinks to himself. A random connection of his military service pops into his head. A sudden jolt strikes his right arm and it feels like dead weight.

He reaches over with his left hand to clutch at his right arm. The door to the room swings open. He leaps over, turning the metal table on end as he takes cover behind it, pointing a sidearm he pulled from his hip.

“Who- ack!” he coughs as he tries to question his captors. His throat burns and his eyes water as if he had been pepper-sprayed. He eventually clears his throat enough to finish his question as he points his firearm, peeking out from around the table. “Who are you people? What are you doing to me?”

“Adon! Listen, we aren't going to hurt you!” one of the figures says from the other side of the table.

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“Adon?! Adon Res! That’s me. My name is Adon” Adon says as his head swims. He keeps his eyes and his gun trained on the people across the room.

“Yes! Yes! You are Lieutenant Adon Res. Please, lower your weapon,” the figure says, taking a step forward as his lab coat sways. “I’m Bertram Wade, a bio-technologist.”

“I don’t care who you are. Why am I here? Why can’t I remember anything clearly?” Adon asks.

“I’m sure that’s just a side-effect and that you will regain your memory, soon.”

“A side-effect of what? What did you do to me?”

“We didn’t do anything to you.” another person steps forward, dressed much more casually than Bertram. “Well, we did some stuff-... we did... Okay, we did a lot of stuff to you. Hi, my name’s Bruce, by the way.”

“What- what did you do? Fix it.”

“That’s just what we did, Adon. We fixed you.”

“Fixed me how?”

“Bruce, that’s enough!” Bertram says.

“We brought you back, Adon. Back to life, you were killed.” Bruce says, solemnly. He slowly steps toward Adon.

“I don’t believe you! Where-where is my wife? Where are my children?”

“Adon, I’m sorry. They’ve been dead for over 100 years now.”

“Bruce! Stop it!”

“For someone talking to a man holding a gun, you’re not telling me what I want to hear!”

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“But Adon... you’re not holding a gun.”

Adon scowls at Bruce and then slowly moves his focus from abductors to his hand. His entire right arm is metallic. The gun that he is holding is actually constructed of metal from his arm. His mouth hangs open at the sight of his arm. He spreads his palm open and watches as the metal shifts, like sand, and forms back into his fingers and arm.

“I call it Malleable Metalloid Technology. I invented it.” Bruce says with a proud look and his arms folded.

Adon looks down past his arm and notices his leg is also metal. He starts to panic and gathers up the gown from around him.

“What did you do!? Where’s the rest of my body?”

“Adon, calm down! Bruce, he’s crashing again! Do something!”

Adon drops to his knees clutching his chest and then his head. The voices in the room mix together, each demanding action.

“Help him!”

“We can’t lose all of this progress.”

“If this doesn’t work this time, Project Paragon will be decommissioned! You two will have to answer for this.” one of the men dressed down in military gear and epaulet says to Bertram and Bruce. Adon’s vision blurs as the commotion continues around him. Bruce reaches on the waistband of one of the officers and approaches Adon as he extends a stun rod.

“This might hurt a little.” Bruce jams the rod into Adon’s chest and everything goes black.

Muffled voices are heard arguing by Adon, as if he is underwater.

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“This was the last straw!”

“It wasn’t my fault.”

“I am so tired of you two and your petty arguing. This project cost the military millions of dollars we don’t have to spare. You’ll be lucky if you’re not tried for treason during wartime!”

“Will you all relax? I know what I’m doing. It’s called a soft reset.” says Bruce as he nods towards Adon’s body, now upright and walking slowly as he shakes his head trying to clear out the muffled haze. “Don’t worry, Adon. Those stun batons pack a punch but it will wear off soon.”

“Why did you do that?”

“Let’s just say this isn’t the first time you’ve been with us. It’s the first time you’ve spoke or recognized who you were, but not the first time being awake. Each of the other times you crashed.

“I crashed? You mean I passed out?”

“No, it was crashing, like a computer. I mean, we’re all computers anyway, when you really think about it; processing units, heat sinks, power sources, data input, output, and memory.”

“Bruce, you can nerd-out to him some other time.”

“Right, Bertram. As I was saying, you failed to retain any of the new data or stimulus, so you crashed. This time, my quick thinking prevented that from happening. I reset you, without your memory resetting.”

“So I’m a computer?”

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“Oh, no. You have highly advanced, non-biological components but you’re not a machine.”

“Well, I wouldn’t call this being a man. So, what AM I?”

“You, my friend, are Project Paragon.”