

## A Blessing And A Curse

“Buh bump. Buh bump.”

I lifted my heavy eyelids as my loud, sluggish heartbeat woke me from my sleep.

I jolted into alertness.

“Beep! Beep! Beep!” sounded the cordless heart monitor as my heart rate sped up from my sudden movement. Like a security camera, my eyes scrutinized my crisp white surroundings, scanning every detail. It imprinted upon my occipital lobe and transferred the memory into my cerebrum.

“Neural implants in place and successful. Neurons are firing at accelerated rates and retaining all electrical signals. Memory storage increased by 56.9%. You may now access 50% of your brain capacity,” droned the neurologic scanning robot.

I lifted my arm to scratch my nose and it hit me. I could move.

I had Parkinson’s disease, a progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects movement. Key word there is had.

Ten years ago, Parkinson’s disease began developing earlier and earlier in young adults with more severity. I was one of the victims. The medical field had been testing for cures, but many were unsuccessful, not allowing the full recovery of motion. Finally in 2047, a prominent neuroscientist developed an extremely risky trial to cure my imprisonment. I leapt at the offer immediately. I was the sole volunteer. Even with my speech robot that translated my brain waves to words and my powered exoskeleton that allowed me to walk without falling (but tediously slowly), human genes have become so susceptible to the symptoms of the neurodegenerative disease that I knew I would only get worse.

I jumped with a start as Dr. Pine rapped his knuckles on my door. Dr. Pine was the scientist who created this advanced adaptive technology theory to unlock 40% more of the 90% brain capacity unused by humans. By doing this, the tissue that was degenerated by the disease is replaced by this new active tissue. Only once a higher level of brain function was unlocked could the rest of

the brain handle an implant to halt the progression of the neurological degeneration. This was achieved through risky deep brain stimulation surgery unlike the world had ever seen, along with cognitive enhancing supplements and nootropics to be consumed for three months prior to the operation.

As he entered the room, a petite robot used for checking vitals followed in tow. "Scanning in process... Vitals normal. Heart rate is 89 beats per minute. Temperature is 98.7 degrees. All organs are at normal functioning level. Patient is at no apparent risk," spoke the robot's monotone voice.

"Hello Marianna," began Dr. Pine. "After completing a few tests and gathering research you will be free to return to your home. If anything seems amiss please contact me. Thank you for agreeing to be our first human test subject."

As I approached the door of my residence pod, the door melted away at my detected facial structure. I marched into the living quarters and was overcome by a wave of ecstasy. Assisted living robots would never again roam my halls. I could provide for myself!

Two weeks later...

I rested my head back on my pillow for a night of peaceful rest.

"Initiate slumber mode."

Every light clicked off and my sight was swallowed by darkness. I could almost feel the lack of energy running through the bulbs. I allowed my tired eyelids to shut as my brain began flying through my experiences of the day. It recapped my last few weeks and sucked up all the data like a greedy computer.

As the days had gone by I had discovered new abilities erupting out of nowhere. For instance, not only could I see other living organisms I could feel their life force near by. When touching another person's flesh I had the ability to detect their emotions. I could pick up other languages within a mere hour. My

proprioception had increased dramatically as well as my working memory capacity. This allowed me to recall any memory I had ever experienced.

Anytime I uncovered an additional capability I felt an excitement unlike any thing I had ever encountered before. My desire to grow, to become something better, stronger, smarter swelled exponentially in the coming days. I processed information more efficiently than the latest super computer. I devoured skills that were foreign to me minutes before hand. I understood enough nuclear physics in one day to build atomic bombs. I didn't just want to learn, I craved it. I needed it like I needed water.

One night I selected a book about all known existing human brain functions from my holographic library. I swiped my hand through the air to reveal the first chapter. As I consumed the information I had a fleeting thought. My head snapped up from the projected image and my eyes widened.

What if I could unlock more neural capacity?

My mind was spinning with the possibilities, attempting to imagine the things I'd be capable of.

I was hardly aware of my own voice demanding my iPhone 26 to call Dr. Pine.

"Hello?"

"Hi it's Marianna," I responded hastily, hungry for an answer to my burning question.

"Are you able to unlock more than 50% of a human being's brain capacity?"

"Well I may have been able to look into it a few weeks ago, however a couple days after your surgery took place government confiscator robots ransacked my lab and expropriated all of my research and equipment. They believed it was too dangerous to be in the hands of an independent scientist. They even seized my surgeon robots. They deposited them at the Human Enhancement Department run by the government. That place is a fortress. I'm sorry there's nothing I can do."

I hung up before he could produce another syllable.

I had to get into that facility.

Practically sprinting, I made my way to the front of my residence and entered my self-driving vehicle.

“Take me to the Human Enhancement Department and pull up the blueprints to the facility on the windshield.”

I immediately memorized the diagram and schematics. Realizing I'd need a weapon to gain access to the chamber that the supplies I needed were in, I removed my self-defense stun ray from beneath my seat and set it to kill. It was the only thing that could destroy a government grade robot. I thought about the fact that there'd be humans attempting to stop me as well. My old self would've cringed at the thought of harming another human being. On the contrary, my new cognitive abilities allowed me to see the truth about regular humans. They were beneath me now. Their humanity was their paramount weakness. I no longer possessed that poisonous trait.

I exited my vehicle the moment it came to a halt, my stun ray concealed underneath my shirt and pants. The door to the facility melted away as it sensed my approach.

“Welcome new visitor,” greeted an automated voice.

Attempting to provide the appearance of calmness I proceeded to the elevation pipe.

“Floor 58.”

The floor beneath my feet shot up and within seconds I was exiting the pipe.

The moment I caught a glance of a security robot it rushed at me, recognizing my weapon through its x-ray glasses.

I whipped out my stun ray and shot directly at it.

It shuddered and dropped, it's circuitry fried.

Sprinting down the hall, I fervently searched for room 5478. On the way I was forced to take out five more robots and three scientists.

Suddenly I caught a glimpse of the room number out of the corner of my eye and skidded to a halt. I recognized the password pill lock and groaned.

I retraced my steps until I came upon a fallen robot. I ripped the x-ray glasses from its head and shoved them onto my face. Turning my gaze to the dead scientist next to it, I recognized the password pill in his stomach.

Five minutes later, I arrived at the door to the lab with the deceased doctor in my arms. The door melted away as it detected the signal emanating from the doctor's body. I charged through the door and was thankful that there were no other scientists to slow my progress.

My eagerness to experience the power of more neural capacity overcame me as I approached the holographic research table.

My brain devoured the information strewn out before me.

The government had been planning to create superwarriors with Dr. Pine's newly gained technology. Typical.

However, I noticed in the research that the scientists had figured out a way to eradicate the surgery and pills. Instead, they had synthesized an injection that would travel through the blood stream and attach microscopic stimulators to the brain.

My eyes then caught sight of a syringe and I knew it was the injection.

My arm trembled slightly as I slipped the needle into my skin, emptying the container.

I felt my blood pump the stimulators to my brain. They latched on, releasing their first charge.

My vision blurred to blackness.