

Ascension

### **Chapter 1: Memory**

I don't remember the explosions, nor do I remember what ended my life. The falling buildings and the cars crushed and melted into a fusion of molten steel and ash. maybe I was near a bomb, and the intense heat evaporated me instantly.

Perhaps I survived the initial blasts, only to die a slow, painful, radiation-fuelled death later. None of that matters now, anyway. It's always the same dream, or is it a memory? Screaming, the sky splitting open, erupting, bright lights, the feeling of utter hopelessness, then nothing.

This nightmare haunts me most nights, a side effect of too many enhancements. Or maybe I've just got a wire loose in this body. I'm not even sure how long I've been having the nightmare; it seems to get more intense as the days pass.

Ten years ago, I became one of a small portion of humanity to be reborn after we blasted ourselves into oblivion. We learnt from texts and recordings recovered from wrecks that around the end, the world had gotten to such a state that the word 'deterrent' was seen as a threat rather than a defence. We don't know what started the war, only that whatever happened started with every major superpower sending millions upon millions of soldiers wearing the most advanced exosuits into slaughter after slaughter before abandoning any kind of peace talks and nuking tactical locations. Tactical locations turned to civilian locations. Once the smoke cleared and the dust settled, there was no one left to press any launch buttons, not that it mattered. By that point, everyone was long dead, the majority of Earth a radioactive wasteland.

To be reborn is no small thing. However, many years, be it tens or hundreds after the war, none of us knows for sure our planet was visited by an alien race called the Kuber, possessing technology lightyears ahead of what we had. These Kuber studied our decimated remains, our cells, recreating models of our brains and nervous systems and studying how they worked. The Kuber brought back the minds of a few million of humanity and gave them new homes in synthetic bodies they had created in our image by combining cybernetics and biological matter. I remember when I first woke, it was like being punched awake from the most peaceful sleep I had ever had. I could feel everything around me; my skin felt tough and irritated, and I couldn't remember a thing save for a few flashes, not my old name nor anyone I knew before death.

I was reborn with the thirteenth batch of new humans ('Risen' we've come to call ourselves). The first batch of Risen was hundreds of years before me. They hold the largest amount of information from the old world. Working with the Kuber to uncover what they could about our past, digging through the radioactive wasteland to find signs of what led us to this point put them in the highest positions of power in our new society, operating on the mantra that those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it.

### **Chapter 2: The Academy**

Having given up on any further attempt at sleep, I rise from my pod and put on my oversuit, white all over with dark purple lining, I look in the mirror and can barely recognise myself, has it really been ten years?

It is my 24th birthday, at least what I believe it to be. When I was reborn, I was told that I was 14 years old, but there was no way to tell what my actual birthday was. So many of us, those who didn't give up on the concept of age, celebrate our birthdays on the anniversaries of our rebirth.

“Good morning, Mr. Star. It is time to complete your morning routine,” chirps a voice from across my room. I look over and see the small round body of Winston, my Symbioid. Every Risen is given one upon rebirth in order to ‘develop our minds further and aid with reintegration into society’. Apparently, old humans used to have creatures called dogs and cats for this. I’ve only ever seen drawings of such creatures and read a little about them. Symbioids can fly, talk, and don’t need to be cleaned, but I still think I’d prefer a dog. I like to sometimes imagine that whoever I was in my previous life had a dog.

“Yeah, I know. Give me a few minutes, Winston. It’s my birthday, 24 whole years. I’m starting to feel old now, wouldn’t you agree?” I reply, walking over to a small tablet on the wall with ‘morning routine in progress’ flashing on it.

“Nonsense, sir, I look at you now and still see the spitting image of the freshly reborn pile of confusion you were the day I met you!” Winston chuckles

“Remind me to remove sarcasm from your software next time I update you,” I joke back as I put my finger up to the screen. It scans my fingerprint before pricking it to extract some blood. The sharp pain no longer registers, but it only helps to wake me up. I lean forward and stare into the black mirror, which then shines a harsh blue laser, scanning my retinas. After this, the MediDroid, a cylindrical robotic arm, extends from the wall next to it and wraps around my head. It begins to turn, scanning my brain for any irregularities. Maybe it’ll find out why I’ve been having those nightmares.

Once my morning procedure is done, I continue with my mandatory smoothie and hygiene procedures before making my way towards the exit of my room.

“Do have a good birthday, sir. I would ask you to remember, however, that it is mandatory for you to attend the academy today for your annual cognitive recalibration, failure to do so is a one-way ticket to deactivation.”

“Thank you for that ever-so-friendly threat of a second death, Winston. You always know how to cheer me up of a morning,” I say with a tone so dripping with sarcasm that there may as well have been a puddle of passive aggressiveness on the floor, “yes, I’ll go to the academy as soon as I can, the recalibration is about the only use I have for those dunces anymore anyway.”

I exit my apartment and reel back a little as I take in what greets me, a cacophony of sirens and horns. The sun is blocked out by a large traffic jam of gravcars floating in the air whilst pedestrians rush around underneath them, holograms litter the pathways advertising different off-world resorts, my eye is caught by a hologram of an animated girl advertising rover rides on the moon. The air is scented thick with the smell of the local mod shop; people will go there to get cybernetic enhancements, and the scent that it produces, burning synthetic flesh with a hint of steel dust, that’s something that lingers no matter how many scented mods you install on your body. I begin making my way toward the academy when I am startled by a voice.

“Star! You heading to the academy?”

Guts, another one of the thirteenth batch of Risen, runs towards me, clutching what looks to be a small metal ball. He is approaching me with such excitement that he doesn’t see the group of men in suits he is quickly crossing into.

“Ouch!” Guts yells as he slams into the ground. The men pay him no mind and continue to walk as a faint shimmer ripples across their bodies.

“Fucking corpo forcefields, they’re lucky that I didn’t have this little baby working,” Guts holds up the metal ball he was running with.

“Yes, I’m sure that corpo forcefields are nothing compared to the might at which you can throw a ball,” I say whilst helping him up.

“Your talent as a comedian is equal to none. Honestly, I think that you should just pack up the A.I. studies and work full time as a travelling clown,” we both laugh as we begin to walk together, “seriously though, this isn’t ‘just a ball’, this is the next generation personal defence systems, I wanted to present it at the next inventor’s expo!”

Guts and I have been friends for as long as I can remember, and whilst I discovered a talent for creating artificial intelligence through the codes and algorithms I write, Guts found his calling in inventing. Over the course of ten years, I have seen all manner of droid, mech suit, weapon, vehicle, and anything in between come out of his lab at the academy. In order to make a little extra money on the side, he even began producing an advanced generation of androids for the city’s pleasure houses, which turned out to be his most successful venture yet.

“So long as this doesn’t blow up in my face, give me a little demonstration, I say as we cross a busy road.

“Fine, but I don’t want other people seeing before I present it, so let’s go down here,” he points towards an empty alleyway, and we jog down it, “Okay, here goes.”

He places his bag on the floor and holds the ball, no bigger than half the size of his palm, in front of him. All of a sudden, his left eye glows purple, and the ball begins to hover just above his palm. It then produces a hexagonal pattern across its surface and vanishes.

“What the fuck?” Is all that is able to escape my lips.

“This is my local ordinance kinetic interference droid, or LOKI for short, able to passively solar charge and stay in constant motion around its user connection through a DNA link in the eye and a synaptic link in the brain. It stays hidden at all times thanks to the cloaking tech, but if I even begin to feel threatened.”

As if to provide a demonstration, the ball suddenly reappears, ominously floating just above Guts’ right shoulder.

“This little bot will eliminate the need for any Risen bodyguards and save a lot of lives,” Guts beams, “the spherical shape is due to both the omnidirectionality of the droid and to accommodate for the ‘O’ part of its name, that little ball is loaded with enough light-based, explosive, chemical and radioactive based weaponry to take out a small army, and that weaponry is pointed in every direction, so to answer your earlier joke, yes, this ball would be enough to handle some corpo forcefields.” He says with a smug look on his face.

We begin our walk again to the academy, and I can’t help but leave my surprise painted across my face.

“The only cloaking tech I’ve seen in use has been on the big Kuber Panzers that go to and from the capital towers, and from what I can tell, they use a generator onboard, droid or not, nothing that small has a cloaking device.”

“And here we see the downsides of you leaving the academy, Star!” Guts jests as he slaps me on the back, “We get all of the new experimental tech first, I was able to implement that into my designs.

You know I hear the A.I. department hasn't been the same since you left, and they've made some developments that- "

"Whatever 'developments' you think they've made, I can guarantee you I made four years ago at least, and I wouldn't have left if I thought they could offer me anything other than some second-gen old bastard praising my abilities and then trying to steal them." I snap back, perhaps a little more aggressive than needed.

"I know it's a touchy subject, man, but they're not trying to steal your ideas. The whole point of the academy is to make a better future for the whole of the Risen as a species, not just ourselves."

"Whatever," I say as we both realise there's no point arguing the subject.

I, like every Risen, had been inducted into the Sol Academy when I was reborn. The academy was named after our sun and put an emphasis on the Risen's thriving on Earth and throughout the solar system. Being taught things like advanced robotics, terraforming, rocket science and artificial intelligence. I was at the top of my classes for my work in artificial intelligence, but I wanted my work to be my own. When my professors suggested taking my work to be used for different projects, I immediately left the academy. My A.I.s are my own creations, so advanced that in the hands of others, it could bring dire consequences.

"We're nearly there!" Guts yells as he begins to pick up the pace.

We turn the corner of a strip of offices and are greeted by a giant complex of intricately designed white buildings surrounded by gardens. Relics from the old world decorate the gardens, laid there as reminders from the first-generation Risen for any students looking for motivation in their studies.

We continue on to walk onto a large path, flanked by thousands of other students who have come for the exact same reason as us: recalibration.

### **Chapter 3: Recalibration**

The process begins with a long line into the academy, assigned to the different generations of Risen. Once we get to the front of said line, we are then directed into different rooms wherein lies the pods, sensory deprivation tanks meant to reduce our synthetic bodies to their base functions for scanning. I walk into my assigned room and approach the egg-shaped pod; it opens, and a long cable floats up from the dark liquid contained within. I grab the cable and attach it to the port in the back of my head. All Risen are created with certain essential cybernetics, and this is numbered among one of them.

I climb into the pod and submerge myself in the liquid as the doors slowly close above me.

The true absence of sight and sound is something one rarely experiences. A curious sensation, I imagine this is what being exposed to the void of space feels like. I can't tell if it's been minutes, hours, or years. Time is a concept for those with perception.

The doors part above me, and the gift of sight is again bestowed. I rise from the pod and dry off with a towel that appears to have been placed during my recalibration. I redress and head out to meet Guts.

The halls of the academy stretch far, and despite the massive amount of people here for recalibration, they seem empty. I begin walking through and notice my old classroom.

A look can't hurt. Guts doesn't seem to be finished yet, anyway.

I walk into a large classroom that once convinced a younger Star the academy could sharpen his mind and develop his skills, but beneath every kind promise lies deceit, and all I found in my time here were teachers who did nothing but suggest uses for my work, never improvements.

I look around the large room before my eyes reach my old teacher's desk. I peruse the sleek ceramic before stopping at a file with a word I haven't seen in a long time.

'Pilgrim.'

My eyes widen as I instinctively snatch the file and immediately open it to look at the contents. My fears are realised as I read pages of my own work, copied word for word, work that I had never once written about on the grounds of the academy.

Pilgrim was the name of a program I had written that could function to integrate with the bodies of the Risen, the same way that recalibration does. However, instead of mere scanning, it could be used to alter their bodies down to the nanite, healing any damage at best or altering minds at worst. I shelved Pilgrim because whilst the mind-altering could be used to prevent crime or help memory, it could also be used to rewrite someone's entire personality or even make a mass number of individuals all follow specific orders.

I glance outside the classroom to ensure there is no one around.

The file is attached to the desk via a Holoweight, an anti-theft device similar to the Corpo fields. I use the optic enhancements in my eye to scan the background data of the device in search of weaknesses. I'm able to break the encryption, and I pick up the file before the Holoweight reactivates. I leave the classroom and hastily make my way out of the academy.

'Sorry, Guts, I'm sure you can find your own way home.'

#### **Chapter 4: Winston**

I don't turn my gaze to anyone as I walk back home. The cameras on the street with their black domes and red reticles scan the walkways, and I do my best to avoid their gaze. The gravcars whiz overhead as I attempt to discreetly enter my apartment.

Home at last.

As I lay the documents out before me, I immediately walk to my desk and activate my screen, a large computer system stretching across my wall. A small silver rectangular object is included in the writing and crudely drawn diagrams.

From my studies on the old world at the academy, I knew this was what was once called a USB drive, used to interface with ancient computer systems, useless to the technology of today as the need for physical storage of data left with the arrival of the first Risen and the creation of the Minerva Plane. A data cloud so vast it could be filled with the data of multiple planets and still not be full.

Whilst primitive tech like this would be useless in the hands of a lesser Risen, my time away from the Sol Academy had allowed me to develop modifications for my screen system to allow for interfacing with different kinds of tech. My aim had been to one day study something from the Kuber, but ancient human technology would be a walk in the park.

I place the drive on a scan pad connected to my system and sit back as the pad analyses the device. Once analysis is complete, nanites emerge from the system ports in my desk and shape themselves

into a small port. I insert the USB and lean in closer to the screen as it lights up, displaying the data stored on the drive.

I cannot believe what I am seeing.

These writings and drawings were not ideas on how to potentially use my AI. They were plans on what exactly was going to happen. Pilgrim, my most dangerous AI creation, was stored in its entirety on this drive, and someone at the academy was planning to use it to control mass groups of Risen.

How it was stolen from my apartment was beyond me. My cyber security was designed by me and remains miles above any other Risen. No physical or digital invasion would pose any threat. The only way something could have been removed from my accommodation would be if it was taken from...

"Hello, sir!" Announced Winston.

I turn around, hoping against hope my fear is unfounded.

"Winston," I say calmly, "do you happen to know why Pilgrim was taken from my apartment and lying on an academy desk?"

Winston hovers in silence, as if pondering his next words, silent hesitation which screams a thousand guilty verdicts.

"Mr. Star, sir, you need to understand that the academy and the Kuber want only the best for all of us, not just for this planet but for the universe. You should feel honoured that your work would provide such a key role in that!" Winston spoke with a direct but slightly condescending tone.

I begin to slowly move toward the port.

"Winston, as my Symbioid, you are bonded to me to aid me and protect me and my home," I begin to raise my voice, "you stole an AI that could be turned into an extremely dangerous weapon and gave it to the people who, judging by their plans intend to do exactly that!"

As I say this, Winston begins to hover higher above as a slow hum starts to emerge from his chassis.

"Sir, I'm picking up a heightened heart rate from you. I would request that you calm down and allow the authorities to explain things to you."

"Authorities?" I stop moving.

Suddenly, a harsh red glow pierces through my windows, followed by a loud booming voice.

"Thirteenth generation Risen, Star," the voice announces, "exit the premises and surrender yourself to the Sol Guard."

"Shit!" This isn't good. The Sol Guard are an elite combat unit of highly upgraded Risen trained from rebirth at the academy, only ever activated to go after dangerous rogue Risen for deactivation.

"We have reason to believe you have become a rogue Risen through data gathered in your last recalibration." The voice continued.

"That's bullshit, and you know it!" I yell back, "I just performed my recalibration today, and there were no issues." I keep talking as I open a screen in my forearm enhancement and begin to activate my defensive Ais.

"Did you or did you not steal sensitive documents from the academy?"

“You mean take back things that were stolen from me?” I shoot back.

“Our background checks show that these documents were willingly donated to the academy from an unknown party. They are the property of the academy. Now, if you come out, we can work on fixing your rogue state without deactivation, but if you continue to resist, we will have no choice but to enter by force and deactivate you.” The voice became louder and more agitated.

My defensive AIs have been armed. If any of the Guard take a step within a metre and a half of my apartment, they won't live to regret it.

I turn around, and Winston is hovering before me, brandishing the blades he uses for food preparation, sticking out of the lower quarters of his spherical body like claws.

“All you needed to do was let the Sol Guard take the Pilgrim. The Kuber can use it for so much more than you ever would. Make this universe the way it was meant to be!”

He rushes at me.

Within half a second, my optic enhancements activate once again, releasing a short-range EMP and deactivating the Symbioid.

Winston clatters to the floor as the blades retract into his shell.

“Is every Symbioid serving someone else?” I question as I remove the drive containing Pilgrim from the port.

“Move in!” I hear from outside.

The Guard agents, equipped with heavy armour and multi-purpose firearms, move toward my apartment as I await my defences to activate.

They get into range and... Nothing.

“In case you're wondering, your recalibration scanned your interface and revealed any defences you have here, so I wouldn't go relying on those.” The voice outside says, almost in a gloating fashion.

I look at my screen through the outside cameras and see that a crowd has gathered behind the Guard gravcars. The voice is a Guard captain using a megaphone.

If they knew about the defences registered on my interface, they wouldn't know about the ones I hadn't had time to register then.

“That's it!” I say to myself, pulling up my forearm screen again and activating my newer, non-passive defences as I approach a small hatch in the floor. I had created this in secret four years ago in order to get away from Winston's constant talking. It would now be my saving grace.

The Guard agents outside have produced a battering ram and are nearing my door. They swing, and the second it touches my door, a band of microlasers fire from the sides of the door, targeting their lower spines and leaving them slumped on the floor, paralysed.

I make sure to override every system in my apartment as I escape into the floor hatch.

I hear the commotion above roar louder as they realise what has happened, and more agents bundle in, only to be cut down by my new defences.

My secret hatch leads into a passageway that apparently used to be an underground rail system in the old world. My plan is to just keep going until I'm far enough away to think of my next move.

I've been walking for about two minutes when I hear a loud boom. That would be the systems I had overridden. I love my apartment, but it would be doing me one last favour covering my escape.

I keep to the sides of the tunnel and hastily make an encrypted call to Guts, but as I activate my encryption programme, my vision begins to blur. I feel light-headed, sick to my stomach and weightless as my body begins to shut down. I drop to the cold, damp floor as I hear Guts' voice yelling through the call.

## **Chapter 5 – The First Generation**

I don't know where I am. Everything around me is chaos. There is fire and screams everywhere, people running as soldiers in exosuits open heavy fire toward the sky, aimed at planes, perhaps? I try to stand up but fall immediately. I look down and realise my leg has been blown off. The shock must have removed the pain. A woman runs towards me, screaming something at me as she looks at my body with horror and picks me up, slumping my arm over my shoulder to carry me.

What is this? I'm shorter than I remember. Is this a dream? A nightmare? The woman drags my confused body to a nearby shelter as the sky screams with fire. We enter a building with a big circular sign above it, and the words 'Camden Town Station' are displayed on that sign.

As we descend the stairs, I turn around to try to see what the soldiers are firing at. I look up to the sky and see thousands of large rectangular hexahedron-shaped ships, with turrets firing from each vertex, tearing through the ground forces. I don't know what these ships are. From what we know of the old world, humanity never had any airships akin to this. My curiosity suddenly turns to dread as I look above the ships and see a large, bright object moving at high speed, too precise for debris and too thin for an asteroid.

The nuclear missile makes impact a few blocks away from where I am standing. As the people around me realise what has happened, their panicked run to the shelter stairs turns into a stampede. People are being trampled over and killed underfoot as the crowd desperately tries to escape to shelter. I feel myself being pulled back as the woman wraps her arm around me and carries me with her.

But it's too late.

I watch as the tidal wave of fire and death approaches us at incredible speeds. I feel pain for a second, followed by heat, followed by nothing.

'Aghhhh!' I scream as I awake in a cold sweat.

I look around. I'm on a cold metal table with a blanket on me in a small, dirty room, judging by the thick concrete of the wall we are underground. My vision is still slightly blurry, and my hands feel numb and tingly. I try to activate any of my cybernetics, but they're unresponsive. I hear footsteps behind me.

'Calm down, you're okay,' Guts says, 'we tracked your call and found you in that tunnel. You're lucky we managed to make a quick encryption cos yours was shot to shit.'

'We?' I turn to see an older man. His Risen body is perhaps in its fifties but heavily modified. He could be hundreds of years old, with long white hair tied behind his head and a '1' branded on his forearm. This man is a first-generation Risen.



'We had to deactivate your cybernetics to run diagnostics on you,' he says in a course, gravelly voice, 'don't worry, they'll return soon. We needed to make sure the Sol Guard or your Symbioid didn't put any bugs in you.'

Guts' LOKI droid floats around me, scanning me as I attempt to piece together the dream I just had. Guts and the first gen tap away at some screens whilst LOKI finishes its scans and returns to its owner as it perches on a pad next to the screen and uploads the data.

'We're good. Looks like you managed to get out of there without any incursions on your system,' Guts says, 'it was a smart move to blow up your apartment. Most of your valuable data was stored in your body anyway. Do you have Pilgrim with you?'

I shoot up from the table and begin to back away from the two of them, alarmed.

'How do you know about that?'

'Star, we've been part of a movement to stop the Kuber and the Sol Academy for a while now, and the point of our movement is that we know as much as we can and that we remain discreet,' Guts sighs as he begins to slowly move towards me, 'I knew about Pilgrim from the moment you created it, and I started to think that you would be willing to help us when you decided to hide it from the world, my hopes for that were realised, however, when you went out of your way to take it back from the academy.'

'Just hold on for a second. this is a lot to take in. You're part of some sort of rebellion?' I say, still on edge, 'I never trusted the academy, and I know why they stole my plans, but what do the Kuber, the ones who literally created us, have to do with this?'

The first gen steps forward.

'Star, allow me to introduce myself,' he says in a now more calming tone, 'my name is Lazarus, you can call me Laz. I was one of the first to be brought back of the first generation. we interacted directly with the Kuber and laid the groundwork for everything society is today. For the first few decades, we directed the new Risen alongside the Kuber in the hopes of bringing humanity back to what it once was, but as time went on and we discovered more about how our world ended, we began to learn more about the Kuber, and the role they played in that destruction.'

'The Kuber had something to do with our destruction?' I cannot hide my shock, 'that can't be true. Every record we have shows that they only showed up long after we were all dust.'

'That is the reason I started this movement,' Laz continues, 'the Kuber had their sights on us long before nuclear destruction, they worked in the background to influence that decision, playing sides against each other to push the world to the brink of war, an alien race with technology lightyears ahead of what we had at the time, it wasn't difficult for them to infiltrate and alter communications between major military bases and heads of countries to instigate nuclear approaches, us first-generation risen found these old data records and discovered the background signals of the Kuber in the transmissions dating back to the war, but when we did a group from within our own ranks turned on us, siding with the Kuber and proclaiming that it was the best path forward for the universe, the rest of us were deactivated, I alone managed to escape, and since then the Kuber have kept to themselves in orbit, talking only with the first-generations in charge of the academy as well as the ones in the highest levels of power.'

I rest my hands on the table as I take this all in. I feel uneasy. I had always been the smartest person in the room, and it was a feeling I was accustomed to, but now I feel like an idiot. Everything I had ever known was a lie, and I had just willingly believed it.

‘Why destroy us, though?’ It’s all I can ask.

Laz’s expression changes.

‘That, none of us knows. We do know that the recalibration process is also used as a method of low-intensity brainwashing. Towards what end, we don’t know, but we do know that the acquisition of your Pilgrim AI was an attempt to speed up the process. The Kuber want something to do with the human mind, as that’s all that is left of our original selves.’

Guts steps forward to face me.

I came to find you on the day of the recalibration to see if any brainwashing had taken effect on you, as we figured out a way a while ago to stave off the effects. It’s how I’ve been able to do it every year, but it seems that to a certain degree, you’re resistant,’ Guts takes on a more serious tone, ‘I need you to tell us those who display resistance sometimes have flashes or memories of the past, have you experienced anything like that?’

I begin to piece things together. Maybe they weren’t dreams or nightmares.

‘Most nights, I’m plagued by the same vision of death and destruction, but I can never make out much of what’s going on,’ I say, ‘but when you found me passed out, I was having a much clearer vision, I was younger, smaller, my leg had been blown off in the chaos, a woman, I knew her I think, dragged me to a shelter called Camden Town Station, I remember looking up and seeing soldiers firing on ships shaped like rectangular hexahedrons, then a nuclear missile hit and I died.’

Laz looks at me as if I have just confirmed his suspicions.

‘Those ships you saw are old Kuber dreadnaughts. It would appear that whilst we were killed by nuclear war influenced by them, they visited our planet themselves to make sure the job was done to perfection,’ Laz slumped back in a chair and sighed, ‘a blank slate to conduct their new experiment on.’

Laz looked at Guts and nodded as they both began to pack things up.

‘We need to leave and regroup with the rest of them,’ Laz said to Guts, ‘Star, I need you to come with us. You’ve clearly got nothing back there, and we’re your best chance to make sure Pilgrim remains safe. Maybe we can even turn the tide against the Kuber.’

This is all happening very fast, but I simply nod and ready myself to move. I don’t necessarily trust Laz, and even less so Guts, having hidden all this from me for so long, but I trust myself to do what is in my best interest and at the moment, this seemed to be it.

We spend some time packing up the screens and removing any trace of us from the small room as we prepare to leave. As we are walking out, Guts puts his hand on my shoulder.

‘Welcome to the Risen Resistance.’

05/05/23

