

## Define Insanity

### Chapter 1

"Wake up dipshit," a feminine voice said. "Mom's pissed and Dad's threatening to disown you."

With the haze of sleep hanging over me for a few seconds, I couldn't really understand what my sister was saying or why I should care. Then, slowly, the memories came back. Flashing lights, whirring and buzzing, a loud *crack* and some sparks. Then... Nothing.

I opened my eyes, winced at the bright sunlight.

"Curtains," I grunted.

"Close them yourself," Chloe muttered. I didn't need to see her to know she was giving me her trademark eyeroll. "Seriously, Mom and Dad are *mad*. I haven't seen them like this since... Since the last time you fucked up one of her projects."

"That was an accident," I sighed, covering my face with a hand and forcing my eyes open. "How was I supposed to know dropping a thumb drive into the swimming pool would break it? I was *six*. Y'all need to let that go. Who keeps all their data and designs on a single thumb drive anyway?"

"Yeah, yeah. C'mon, get up!"

Groaning, I forced myself to sit up.

I was in my room, my bed. That was a good sign. I wasn't in the makeshift medical room. Which meant I hadn't *actually* been electrocuted or anything, despite what I remembered.

The sun was up too. Which meant I must've been out for hours.

Mom's test - it'd been scheduled for midnight.

"What time is it?" I asked, stretching to wake myself up.

"Seven," Chloe said. "They've been bitching about you all night. Barry, they're *really* angry. Like... *Really*."

"I'll be fine," I promised, eyes finally beginning to adjust to the brightness. "Worst they'll do is kick me out. I have friends I could stay with until things blow over."

I looked to her, smiled reassuringly.

A pretty girl, my sister. A tall tomboy with short, black hair and well-toned muscles; arms and legs and abs all clearly defined in the sporty clothes she had on. Tank top and running shorts, with a little fitness backpack slung over one shoulder.

From the look of her, drenched in sweat with her flat chest rising and falling fairly quickly, she must've just gotten back from her morning run.

The look of concern on her face, the worry there, made me force an even bigger smile. One that I hoped looked more confident than I felt.

"I'll be fine," I repeated. "Trust me."

"What in the world," my mother snapped, "possessed you to play around in the server room right when the temporal processor's first activation was underway?!"

"Technically," I said softly, "I was in the server room a while before that. I just... lost track of time."

My mother raised her hands, squeezed the air as if she were trying to throttle me. "Do you have any *idea* how badly things could have gone wrong? All the work that could've been lost? Why?! Why were you in the server room at all?!"

"I was looking for Barry Junior," I shrugged. "Thought he might've been in there."

"Barry Junior?" Mom asked, confusion overwriting her anger for a brief moment. "What?"

"The storage room spider," I said. "He went missing, so I decided to look for him. Figured he might be hanging around in the server room, and I know how much you hate

buggy computers so I-”

The look on her face made me stop talking. The indignant, unamused rage. I was glad for the dinner table between us - as much as a pacifist my mother was, she very much looked ready to kill me right there and then. And with her big brain, she'd totally be able to make it look like an accident and get away with it too.

“Nothing went wrong, did it? Your magic machine computer processor thingy worked, didn't it?”

“Magic?!” Her eyebrows narrowed at me. She was *definitely* contemplating how she could get away with my murder. “There's nothing *magic* about-”

“Yeah, Mom,” I grunted. “I *know*. Not another lecture. Please.”

I'd heard the spiel too many times already. My mother's amazing new invention that spat in the face of Einstein and the laws of physics. The temporal processor that'd ‘change the trajectory of the human race forever’ and how it'd be the ‘next step in our ever-evolving understanding of the universe’ and all that. I did *not* need another self-aggrandising lecture from her.

I loved my mother, but *man* did she have a big head when it came to her genius inventions.

Almost as big as her tits.

I looked pointedly away from her. A move that'd probably piss her off even more, as she'd assume I was being dismissive of her and her anger. But which I *actually* did so my eyes weren't drawn to the colossally huge tits that were, right then, straining the fabric of her lab-coat to the breaking point.

“You need to learn some respect,” my mother sighed after a few silent seconds. “Why can't you be more like your sister?”

Not the ‘comparing siblings’ thing again. How many times did I have to listen to my parents telling me how much better Chloe was, how I should try to be more like her?

“I dunno,” I shrugged, a smile splitting my lips. Even before I spoke the words, I knew I'd regret it. But fuck it! “It's not easy losing a dick and growing a vagina. On the bright side, I'm already pretty similar to her in the chest department, flat as she is ‘n’ all...”

I muttered under my breath as I cleaned. Scrubbing the already-spotless lab floor with a fucking *toothbrush*. Like *this* was supposed to teach my ‘respect’ or ‘responsibility’! This was just *spite*. My mother punishing me for no reason!

Sure, I'd said some *maybe* inappropriate stuff. But so what?! Chloe was my sister. I was *meant* to give her a ribbing every now and then. And so what if I'd been in the server room when Mom had been doing her stupid test?! Not like anything'd gone wrong. Everything was working fine! She'd said so herself!

“Bitch,” I grumbled, scrubbing the floor with the toothbrush. “Stupid, self-righteous, arrogant cunt.”

I looked up, eyes scanning over the room.

If a room could be a person, this room would be my mother. Hands down. It was clinically clean and sharp, orderly and bright and clever. Empty and hollow, except for the *genius* computer built right in the middle of it.

The room was large. Too large for the big computer sitting in the centre. White tile floors, white tile walls, industrial lights in the ceiling. It was lifeless, barren, cold. The only impressive thing about the room was the computer itself. And that was *too* impressive. *Too* genius.

A hulking monstrosity of steel and technical wizardry. It was suspended from the ceiling, beeping and whirring and otherworldly in design.

The world's first computer with a temporal processor.

Regular, every-day processors? They did things sequentially. If you had a database of everyone on Earth, and searched to find everyone named ‘Joe’, the regular processor

would go down the database one entry after the other. It'd read names one by one, setting aside every entry with 'Joe' as a name. Even if a processor could read a million entries every second, it'd take hours to go through the entire database.

Then there were quantum processors. Those bad boys could 'look' at every entry in a database at the exact same time, could find all the Joes in a fraction of the time it'd take a powerful, regular processor. But quantum processing had other limitations and drawbacks. Ideal for some tasks, useless for others.

My mother's invention - the temporal processor - was superior to both in every single way.

I didn't know *exactly* how it worked, Mom liked to keep the specifics to herself ever since the whole gravitational generator incident. But I did understand the basics, and even the *basics* were insane.

If you gave the temporal processor a database of every human who'd ever lived - over a hundred billion unique entries - and searched for everyone named 'Joe', it'd take the processor less than a *nanosecond* to give you the search results.

Because the temporal processor was, in essence, a time machine.

The moment my mother gave the temporal processor a task, it created a 'snapshot' of time, a point for the computer to return to - saved to the servers in the other room. Then, it'd go about doing that task - taking as long as it needed. Minutes, hours, weeks, months, years, decades. However long it took for the task to get done. And, once the task was completed, the processor simply sent the results back to the 'snapshot' made at the beginning of the task.

Ever seen a movie about time travel where someone goes back in time and gives their younger selves information about the future; to get rich or save the world or whatever? Same idea as that, only instead of physical matter being sent back in time, it was just raw information and data.

"I could smash it," I said to myself, looking over at the monstrosity. "Mom would kill me, but I could do it..."

Would the look on her face, seeing her life's work destroyed, be worth dying for?

Yes. Totally.

But not today.

I sighed, forced my eyes away from the amazing computer, returned to scrubbing the floor with the toothbrush.

"One day," I promised myself. "One day."

Now that Mom knew the temporal processor worked - last night had been its first test - destroying the thing would wreck her all the more. Just *imagining* her face was enough to make me smile, make this bullshit punishment she'd given me seem that much less aggravating.

So *what* if I'd been in the server room during the test?

Why was I getting punished when the test had been a total success anyway? The temporal processor had worked. Mom had given it a task that should've taken exactly twenty-four hours to complete, and it'd done it in an instant. It *worked*.

So why the hell was I being punished?!

"Good thing I didn't mention the sparks," I muttered softly.

The servers weren't meant to spark, I was fairly certain of that. And me telling her what I'd seen would've just given her more reason to be a bitch. Whenever something went wrong, she *always* blamed me for it. Even when it *wasn't* my fault.

Bitch.

I pulled down my pants, whipped out my dick, began taking a leak. Head tilted back, eyes on the ceiling as the sound of splashing water filled the bathroom.

"Oh shit," I grinned. "Junior! There you are!"

Right there in one of the ceiling corners, a big spider. Easy to tell apart from any other common household spider from its unique greyish-white pigment.

"My dude," I said, "you would not *believe* the trouble you got me into. Where have you been, man?"

The spider, of course, did not reply.

I finished peeing, nodded goodnight to Barry Junior, then headed back to my bedroom. An annoyingly long walk, that.

Due to the nature of my mother's 'work', she needed a lot of space. Rather than living in a house like a normal family, my parents had bought an abandoned school and paid for renovations to turn it into a live-in, mad-inventor's paradise.

Some classrooms had been turned into bedrooms, others into living areas, others into server rooms and storage rooms and workshops. There were six wings to the building, four of which were empty and non-functional. The two wings that were in use had two bathroom areas each - the old boys and girls restrooms.

The classroom that'd been transformed into my bedroom was, predictably, as far away from the nearest bathroom as it could be.

Using my phone as a flashlight, I made my way down an empty school corridor. With it being pretty much midnight now, everything was pitch-black. Hauntingly quiet - at least in this wing of the building. No doubt, in the 'no-Barry-allowed' wing, Mom was making plenty of noise with her experiments and inventions.

I was a few steps away from my 'bedroom' when light flashed before my eyes.

Sparks.

My vision flickered and, for a single moment, I saw the inside of the server room. Electronics sparking.

Then a jolt of electricity.

Followed by blackness.

Me passing out for the second night in a row.

"Wake up dipshit," my sister said. "Mom's pissed and Dad's threatening to disown you."

I came back to awareness slowly. Groggily. When I tried to open my eyes, I winced - shut them again against the blindingly bright light of morning. It took me a few moments to register I was awake, the words my sister had said.

"Ha, ha," I grunted, unamused. "Very funny."

Me blacking out two nights in a row, my sister waking me up the exact same way both times. Hilarious. Pardon me if I don't start laughing.

"Why aren't I in a hospital right now?"

The first time I'd passed out, it was understandable why Mom and Dad hadn't taken me to a nearby hospital. No physical injuries or burns or anything, no reason to suspect anything was really wrong. They'd been more annoyed at me than worried. But for me to pass out twice in a row, and for them to not at least *consider* there might be something wrong? Now that was just bad parenting on their part.

"You probably will be soon," Chloe muttered. "Seriously, Mom and Dad are *mad*. I haven't seen them like this since... Since the last time you fucked up one of her projects."

I forced myself to sit up in bed, opened my eyes narrowly; as far as I could without the morning sun blinding me.

"Cut it out," I said. "I get it. Funny joke. Hilarious."

"Yeah, yeah," my sister waved her hand dismissively. "Whatever. C'mon, get up."

There was concern in her eyes, even if she was trying to hide it. As my eyes adjusted to the light, I could see the wall she was putting up begin to crumble, real worry taking the place of dismissive indifference.

"Chloe," I grunted. "Are you okay? Did something happen?"

"I'm fine. It's *you* that's fucked. Barry, they're *really* angry. They've been bitching

about you all night.”

“I’ll...” I blinked at her. “I’ll be fine.”

What had I done *this* time?

The look in my sister’s eyes. She wasn’t acting. There was real concern there. Drenched in sweat, wearing the same sporty getup as yesterday...

I shook my head, climbed out of bed.

For some reason, I was wearing the same clothes I had been yesterday too. The clothes I’d been wearing when I’d passed out in the server room, and that I’d still had on when I woke up yesterday morning. Clothes that I’d changed out of, had dumped in the wash basket.

What was going on?

My brain provided an answer right away. An impossible, silly answer. One that defied the laws of reality even more than my mother’s stupid temporal processor.

It couldn’t be.

But, as I left the room, walked with my sister to go see our parents, the feeling was overwhelming. The sensation of déjà vu that rushed through me again and again with every step I took, that flooded my body so fully that it became ever-present.

It *couldn’t* be.

The lecture my mother gave me, back up by Dad’s stern gaze and crossed arms, was the same. Different only in the things I’d said, the way my mother replied to my altered words. The punishment she gave me remained the same. Scrubbing the temporal processor room with a toothbrush to teach me ‘respect’ for my mother’s work and ‘responsibility’ for my reckless actions.

I was too baffled by everything to go against the punishment. Maybe yesterday - the first time I’d gone through today - had just been a weird, prophetic dream. Maybe it was all in my head.

While scrubbing the floor clean, my gaze constantly found itself on the temporal processor.

It just couldn’t be...

I followed the previous day almost exactly. I didn’t remember exactly what I’d said yesterday, so there were little differences in the replies and responses I got. But, other than those tiny anachronisms, the day progressed exactly the same as it had before - save for me checking the time a whole lot more often.

Midnight. That’s when it’d happened.

Twenty-four hours after the temporal processor’s activation.

Afternoon came and went, then evening. The sunlight faded, darkness taking over. And I followed in my own footsteps, right up to my pre-midnight potty break.

I stepped into the bathroom, breathed out a deep sigh.

“It’s not gonna happen again,” I told myself. “I’m gonna piss, go back to my room, play games for a few more hours, then sleep. Tomorrow is going to be tomorrow. Has to be.”

Out my dick came, followed by the sound of splashing water.

“I’m just imagining the whole thing. This isn’t gonna be some Groundhog Day bullshit. Physical matter can’t travel back in time, Mom said so herself. And that cunt is *never* wrong. Ain’t that right, Junior?”

I looked up at the ceiling corner, blinked.

No spider there. The spot was empty.

“Huh.”

Maybe I’d done something slightly different today, had unknowingly set the spider on a different path. Or maybe it was all in my head and I was slowly going insane. One or the other.

I finished peeing, checked the time, walked slowly back to my bedroom with my

phone's light to guide me.

If I'd timed everything right, then any moment now...

As I stepped up to my bedroom door, my vision flashed. For a brief, vertigo-enduing moment, I saw the server room again. Was standing inside it. Exactly where I had been before. Then the spark, the flash. A jolt of electricity.

Then blackness.

My very last thought before passing out; a single word.

*Motherfucker.*