

CHAPTER 1

3000 A.D.

After the Great War that ravaged Earth, what became known as GL came into existence, and it built a protective city to shelter those that survived. The world outside the city was uninhabitable, as the air and ground would not sustain human life. The new city lay within an airtight protective bubble on a location that once was New York City. Few people understood how GL came about, or who started what became a massive organization that controlled every aspect of the citizens' lives in the new city. The Great War occurred hundreds of years before 3000 AD and the offspring of the war now numbered over twenty million. Long ago GL had moved to build its power over their ancestors that managed to survive the war over the centuries by establishing rules. The first rule enacted by the GL upon the masses was one punishable by death, and the rule was simple enough: "It is forbidden to discuss anything from the past, prior to or after the Great War." Countless other rules were required for the masses to follow without question, and a broken family of humankind from a war-ravaged world explicitly understood following GL's rules was the best way to survive. Another rule emphasized the benefit of the whole overruled the benefit of the individual; GL made that maxim easy to understand, and those that did not follow the rule were never seen again.

Over hundreds of years, changes were made to the existing rules, altered or refined to strengthen the hold of GL over the population. A few intellectuals noticed the altering and changing of the rules, but kept their voices secret from GL, as the improved rules about discussing the past were rewritten to read, "It is forbidden to discuss prior history, as the violation for doing so is punishable by death." Yet somewhere in the new world order, citizens' hushed voices secretly continued to discuss earlier centuries' history, and four words represented early years more than all other generational stories passed on. All adults knew these words, "The sky rained stones." No one understood the significance of these words, but there were people who understood that in a distant future there would be a world without GL, and the words seemed to have embodied hope within the citizens' souls as they hungered for freedom from tyranny.

GL was secretive and feared by men within the city, yet these same men knew that GL provided a rather valuable benefit besides shelter from the uninhabitable world outside the bubble. GL was the only source that could provide life-giving nourishment. GL reminded the citizens that they owed their life existence to GL and broadcast such information by message throughout the city. "You are indebted to GL, for GL gave life for the Great War survivors and now for you and can withdraw nourishing food without cause. GL loves you." Life was difficult as GL had more rules, and the means of enforcing those rules. Like any city,

there was a police force, a special security force and soldiers, and State officials. All rules decreed by GL were monitored by these forces for violations.

Another broadcast stated, "You are indebted to GL, as you cannot live in the environment outside the city, as death will result. GL exists to serve you." All citizens recognized the bubble protected them from the poisonous air outside the city, from whispers of current generations of citizens that told them about past families that died before reaching the protective barrier. They had heard those families had died slow painful deaths. The reason the Great War started did not matter anymore, as hundreds of years had passed.

Other whispers included vague descriptions of what were known as mountains or oceans, but the descriptions were not understood completely as to what mountains or oceans were. For now, all people had to do was follow the rules and survive another day. Yet somewhere in the new world those four words of the past, "The sky rained stones," would not be lost from their memory in this dark city, and the world created by GL.

A man stood, head angled upward in thoughtful silence reading the words *VERITAS VINCIT* that were etched in a vertical stone column resting upon two massive monolithic pillars that guarded the fifty-foot entry of the two-hundred-story building encased in brown-bluish colored glass. He then read the etched words aloud, pointing his index finger upward toward each word.

"Truth conquers."

He looked down the broad street that many centuries before was packed with people but now the city within the bubble had entire sections empty of inhabitants controlled by security forces. A swooshing sound caught his attention, and he glanced up thirty stories to see a sky cab floating, heralding the arrival of clients to the building.

The man frowned at the desolate street and shook his head, indicating unhappiness. In the distance was another skyscraper of rusted steel that thrust upward taller than all the other buildings. The top of the building was shaped into a giant human hand with the palm up and open. The hand was perched above a massive bowl, where giant flames shot upward into the air. He grimaced at the sight of this building. Miles above the skyscrapers was a gigantic plastic bubble that encompassed the entire horizon.

The bubble was supported by umbrella-type bands. In the center of the bubble was huge conduit pipe that led to the ground where more pipes were attached. At street level one could hear the buzz of fans inside the street's sewer grate, where the brown smog was drawn in. One could not see outside the entire lower part of the structure. At the center of the bubble's top, a brown cloud was swirling around, and was being pulled inside the conduit pipe. The bubble was filthy with grit that had formed on the surface. Tiny vehicle-type machines moved about

cleaning off the grit, but did little to keep up with the smog and the dirty film that kept forming on everything it came in contact with, sticking to the interior of the bubble.

Little light penetrated the plastic bubble and the opaque sun beating down outside the bubble was but a soft glow, offering no solitude for this man as he declared emphatically, "Such a long way, man's journey, for my words still have not been heeded." He sighed, not in despair, but purposeful determination. "I have work to do. What will it take, Merikan? Can science defeat evil? No not science, but that all good men stand up to evil. For this I pray." With barreled jaw set, the scientist entered the building whose modest plaque indicated it was the World Council for Scientific Development.

For over a thousand years, since early 1980 AD, the World Council for Scientific Development, known as the WCSD, or the "Council," had been the leading think tank for the World's scientists up until the Great War that nearly destroyed Earth. The Council had a master, GL, whose full initials were GLGD.

GL told the Council what to study and what not to study on their behalf. In the '70s the Council had total control over the world's computers, and used those computers to see how humans fit into our galaxy of stars and distant galaxies to gain an understanding into the universe. The world was governed by scientific laws, yet people always asked the question, "Who created us?" In the past the Council had attempted to find the definitive examination to determine man's origin, and explored terrestrial beings as a plausible answer to our existence, but with all studies, they never came up with the answer, for if man could not come to any conclusion about his origin, how could powerful computers? The answer was simple. The computer was a reflection of man, not his creator.