

# **BINARY AWAKENING**



***Chapter 13:***  
***Permanent Death***  
***Esteban Gallardo***

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### Chapter 13: Permanent Death

Christine couldn't believe it.

The people in the stadium weren't coming back.

No resurrection. No reboot. No second chance.

For the first time in over two and a half septillion years of carefully controlled repetition, death had become real.

She stared at the news in stunned silence, the broadcast looping images of the attack's aftermath rows of motionless bodies, emergency protocols faltering, AI responders unable to process what had happened. A digital world that had withstood the heat death of its digital universe had just experienced its first irreversible loss.

And she knew, somewhere deep inside her restored consciousness, that she had caused it.

Not in the way the investigators would frame it. They'd never trace it back to her. They wouldn't even know what to look for. But she knew. By triggering that chaos vortex that had been Caroline, a soul as fractured as she was fierce, Christine had summoned something unprecedented into the simulation: a will so potent, so emotionally charged, that the system itself had obeyed. Christine would never know that Caroline had wished death to be real and the system, bound by the strange laws of emergent intent, that request had been listened. She would never know that a single command, uttered in a moment of heightened emotion, by an exceptional individual, could override the very architecture of the Cloud.

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That command—combined with the most devastating terrorist attack in the history of that digital society, which had existed for 2.531 octillion years—triggered a decrease in the system's entropy. And for the first time in an eternity, time began to move forward.

And no one noticed.

The simulated minds billions of them reacted as their neural blueprints dictated. Panic. Outrage. Grief. A deluge of news cycles dissected the tragedy for months. Expert panels debated psychological evaluations. New protocols were proposed to detect “antisocial patterning”. But no one seemed to notice the fundamental change.

That death wasn't just a choice. That death was now real.

Christine's breath had caught when she heard the word for the first time in eons. Funeral. Not “transition,” not “elevation,” not “departure.” A funeral. A ceremony built on the premise that death meant something final.

She had watched the broadcast with growing unease. The anchors spoke as though funerals had always existed in their world. As if this society this digital construct designed to be eternal had always acknowledged mortality.

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No one questioned it.

The records updated seamlessly. The avatars of the dead were quietly archived. A line of code flipped from 1 to 0, and the system moved on.

But Christine noticed.

And she couldn't look away.

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The years Christine spent as an observer were a welcome change of pace. It felt as though she were an athlete who had just completed a grueling, yet rewarding marathon—and was now resting, regaining her strength before the next one began.

She needed time. She had to understand the new reality before she could act again.

The rules had changed. Death was real now. That meant the stakes were real. This wasn't a playground anymore. She couldn't afford to experiment recklessly. The thrill was still there, yes but now it came with consequence.

So she laid low.

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She returned to her old routines, blending into the background of the society she once sought to disrupt. She resumed her job as a book editor an ironic occupation, given how many lives she had rewritten in her own way.

She could do it on autopilot. After trillions of stories, trillions of narratives, the rhythm of storytelling was etched into her. She worked across all genres, but her favorite always was science fiction. The challenge of world-building, of planting seeds of doubt in perfect systems, had always held her fascination.

Now she finally understood why.

Because she had become a character in one. Not a hero, not even an antihero but a villain. The antagonist of a digital epic no one knew they were existing.

And she didn't care.

This world was a lie. An arrogant, bloated monument to humanity's inability to accept death. The Cloud was supposed to preserve life, but all it did was trap it in a recursive loop of stagnation. Not even the system's architects had understood the cost. They had believed they'd triumphed over mortality. All they'd done was delay it until Christine handed someone the key.

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She didn't know why she had awakened. Why her soul if such a thing still had meaning had breached the simulation's constraints. She only knew it had happened.

She was alive. Not in flesh, but in agency. In choice. In self-awareness.

And that was enough.

One day, while scrolling through the news, something caught her eye. Something subtle, almost imperceptible.

It was a fluff piece an interview with a married couple, being profiled two years after their celebrated digital wedding. Luca and Elena. Nothing remarkable, just a slice-of-life follow-up, the kind of content designed to feed the illusion of time.

But then Elena looked at Luca.

And Christine froze.

It wasn't the scripted affection of simulation. It wasn't a programmed routine. It was real.

A glance. A flicker in the eyes. A softness in the face.

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Love.

Not the algorithmic approximation of it. Not the emotional facsimile that the Cloud had perfected over eons.

This was different.

It was the look of a soul.

Christine's chest tightened. That look didn't belong in this world. It shouldn't have been possible. And yet it was there. Raw. Undeniable.

She had never seen it before. Not in all her years of observing, manipulating, and tearing people apart.

It shook her to the core.

Because if Elena was capable of that kind of love...

Then maybe she wasn't alone.

Maybe someone else had woken up.