

**ANH DO**



**E-BOY**

***PART HUMAN. PART ROBOT. ALL HERO!***

# ANH DO



Illustrations by Chris Wahl

  
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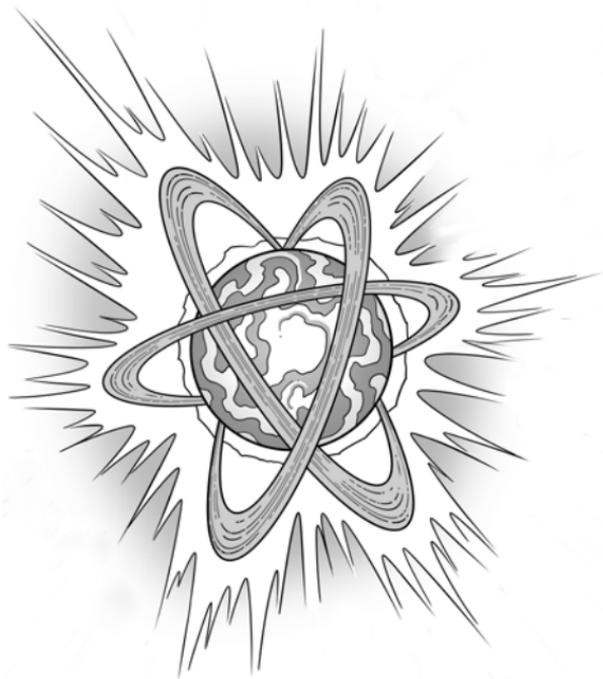
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# CHAPTER 1

*I hate me!* Ethan thought to himself.

*I hate this stupid body, I hate this hospital, I hate everything!!!*

Ethan's angry thoughts swirled around his head as he lay on the operating table in nothing but his underwear.

He considered running out of the room, but he knew he didn't look great in those tight white undies. That was enough to keep him lying there,

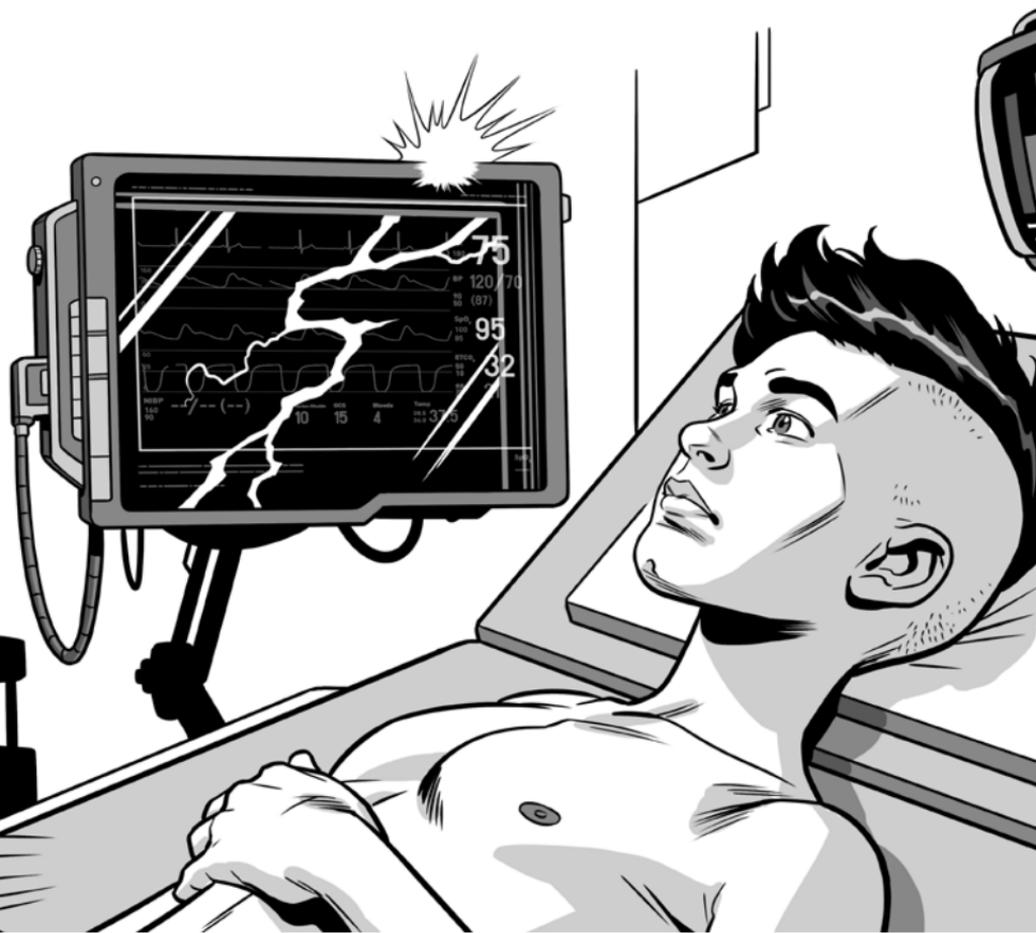
awaiting his fourteenth operation in eighteen months.

The storm raging outside didn't help his mood. Lightning flashed through the windows, glinting off the medical machines around him.

Ethan tried to calm himself . . . *You should be used to hospitals by now*, he thought. *You've spent enough time in them.*

Throughout his childhood he had been plagued with health problems – heart, bone and muscle issues – but, after years of treatments, he thought he'd finally beaten them all.

In his mid-teens Ethan had, for the first time in his life, found himself relatively strong, and able to be . . . normal. He'd made friends, played sport, and to everyone's surprise, including his own, he got a girlfriend.





He'd also been able to concentrate on his true calling, computer coding, and his brilliant marks had allowed him to graduate school early and take up a scholarship to a top computing course at Titan University.

Then the terrible headaches began, followed by the devastating diagnosis of an inoperable brain tumour.

'This looks worse than anyone predicted,' a nurse muttered. Ethan worried she was talking about him, then realised she meant the storm.

'How you holding up there, Ethan?'

Doctor Penny Cook appeared beside him. Her presence was calming, transforming his fear into mere awkwardness.

He felt embarrassed as he lay there, near-naked. He was thin and gangly, and half his hair was shaved off. He didn't exactly feel handsome.



He knew it was silly to get a crush on an older woman – especially his doctor – but he couldn't help it.

Doctor Cook had chestnut hair and deep brown eyes, and her smooth skin was pale from years spent under fluorescent lights in laboratories.

*I might die within the hour, he thought. I can have a crush on whoever I like.*

When Ethan's tumour had been diagnosed, his parents consulted the best doctors in the world. They all said it was impossible to cure him. Then Penny had appeared, like an angel in a shining white lab coat.

She was a prodigy, a leading global expert in neuroscience and artificial intelligence at just twenty-six years of age. She had heard about Ethan's condition and approached his parents to ask if he was willing to try a highly experimental procedure involving a medical android she'd created.

Given his only other option was to die, Ethan had agreed. Now he found himself in a state-of-the-art government medical facility. He'd had to sign dozens of secrecy agreements and go through all kinds of security checks to get inside.

So had his parents, who were waiting outside the operating room.

‘Ethan?’ Penny said. ‘You lost in thought?’

‘Kinda.’

‘It’s perfectly natural to be anxious,’ said Penny, putting a hand on his arm, ‘but we’ll get you through this.’

Ethan smiled weakly. She couldn’t possibly be as certain as she sounded. Not when this was the first time this procedure had ever been attempted.

‘Now,’ said Penny, ‘I believe you’ve met Gemini.’

The medical android stepped into Ethan’s view.

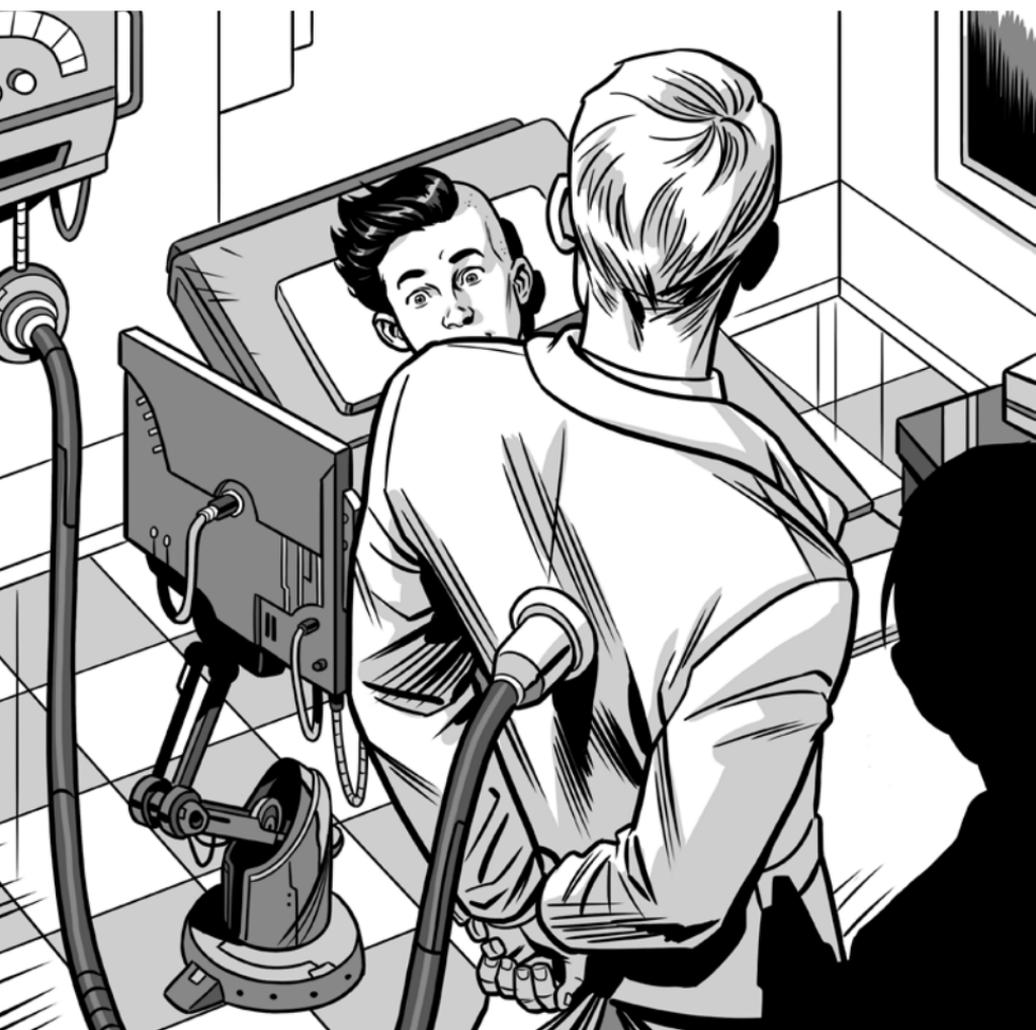
*He looks so . . . perfect,* thought Ethan.

With short blond hair, angular features and lithe frame, Gemini was almost indistinguishable from a man in his mid-twenties. What gave him away were his chrome eyes, and the power



cable reaching from his back into a control panel.

Gemini was a groundbreaking creation, unknown to the public, and one of the reasons Ethan had to sign all those stay-quiet forms. Penny hoped Gemini would revolutionise the medical industry.



‘Hello, Ethan.’ Gemini’s mouth curved upwards in what was supposed to be a reassuring smile, but actually looked a bit creepy. ‘Good to see you again. Are you ready to begin?’

‘Do you think it will work?’ asked Ethan.

‘I have a one hundred per cent surgical success rate,’ Gemini said. ‘However, this procedure is untested. I calculate a probability of—’

‘That’s enough, Gemini,’ Penny interrupted. She shot Ethan an apologetic look. ‘His bedside manner needs a little tweaking.’

‘Just give me the anaesthetic already,’ Ethan said bluntly, and immediately regretted his tone.

‘All right, Ethan.’ Penny reached for the IV attached to his arm and twisted the valve.

As his eyes grew heavier, Ethan wondered if he would ever open them again.

‘Just give me the anaesthetic already,’ weren’t exactly great last words. He needed to say

something better before his tongue went numb.

'Don't screw this up, guys,' he mumbled to Penny and Gemini. *Not a whole lot better!*

The thunder outside sounded like the sky ripping itself apart.

