

LEVELS

By Devin Feilen

Jett turned and looked over the great mountains of Colorado, the wind snapping at his face in the winter air. Currently living up by Durango, a small town that was destroyed during the nuclear attacks in 2025. There is something eerily quiet and protective feeling about these mountains. The military sends out hovercraft to survey the area to see if it's still not sustainable for human life, I make sure that they go back thinking that it's a complete wasteland and they haven't spotted our small little village. There are a total of 5 people living here including me, Seth (Electronic and computer specialist), Chloe (Researcher and Pilot), George (EMT and an adept computer hacker) and Ashley (Architect and designer). And my self, together we make an amazing team and everyone is trained in ballistics and George can shoot a fly off a deer antler from 600 yards away with his new custom made hand crafted hunting rifle with an infrared scope. We have about 7 buildings in our colony, 5 houses, an armory and a kitchen/mess hall/storage. We have done regular raids on the southwestern military base, stealing thousands of dollars in defense and artillery/weapons. We would be able to take on a small army with just the 5 of us, but this isn't our intention. "Time to head out" said George in the earpiece everyone wore at all times even at night. I grabbed my military grade .357 magnum and took a silver briefcase with things we would need for any sort of discovery.

I walked out onto the skywalk above the large mountain as the wind immediately snatched every kind of warmth from my body. I clicked the button on my wrist and was almost instantly covered in a suit made from a synthetic alloy that was pretty much indestructible, you could go swimming on Jupiter if you really wanted to in this suit but nobody ever wanted to try that. The heat back into my body, I saw Seth and Chloe walking down the other bridge towards the commons where George and Ashley would be waiting for us. "Alright guys we are heading up towards Sneffels so make sure you each bring a botfly and excavation equipment, your going to need it.

We hiked up towards the mountain, at 14 thousand feet it looked a lot worse than we all had expected, with some of the roughest terrain in the range. We set up movement sensors all around the base, which took about an hour, and in the mountains you don't want to be on top of a mountain in a snowstorm. We got to about half way up and one of the motion sensors went off, it was right below us. We all looked down and saw one of the rarest leopards in the whole mountain range, but also the deadliest. It was red and stuck out like a sore thumb against the snow. It looked up with its beady blue eyes and makes a lunge. We immediately sprung into action, the suits could protect from most of it but the fact that something that big

and scary chasing you makes the human instincts take over. Everything went downhill from there and we ended up getting beat. Something I forgot to mention is that these animals hunt in packs. The rest came along and by the time we had finished off the last one we were pretty battered. Once we got to the summit we all just fell down and lay in the snow for a while. "Alright guys, each take a slope with your botfly and try to investigate what the hell is going on with this chunk of earth". We kept feeling shakes and rumbling noises around the mountain but thank god didn't cause an avalanche. My little fly, I called it Dragon because of it's resemblance to what used to be called the "Dragon fly". The botflies were little remote-controlled bugs that could fly at a top speed of 57 mph and were the size of your thumb. We used them for recon when we went on expeditions. I was the first to click the alert button on my controller. The botfly had a 360-degree view and I could see on my controller a small white hallway. I started talking to the rest of the guys and they all flew over. Each person had a different type of "bug" and it was easy to tell whose was whose.

We flew into the cave with caution and each botfly was armed with a small cannon that could incapacitate someone who was pursuing it. It was completely non-lethal but it could break bones. As the botfly flew into the cavern, we heard noises and strange whispers. "Guys... What the hell is this place!" Said Seth. "I don't know but I think we better investigate on foot, come back to base and gear up. I want everyone fully armed and ready to take on anything." Said George. As the five of us ventured into the cave, myself carrying a small MAC10 fully auto submachine gun with a M14 CCO with a night vision and thermal scope on my back. In our suits we were safe, but only against bullets not an explosion. The noise would deafen the hearing capability in the suits and we would be completely helpless. The cave ended into a small room, as we crept down towards the end we noticed guards in full military outfit but they were only armed with small M1911 pistols that would do absolutely nothing to these suits, we took the botflies out just me and Ashley and were able to knock out the guards that stood outside of the door. We walked in with strange ease, and we saw no one. It was just a long white hallway like something out of star trek or a futuristic hospital. At the end of the hallway we could see that there was some sort of curtain leading into a wall but the wall glowed and shifted as if it was only a projection. We walked up to it and I stuck my hand towards it. My hand went right through the wall as if nothing at all was there and it was just floating in the air. This was really something none of us had ever seen before, and we all just walked right into the room.

Everything instantly became similar in some way but not in a way I could recall. All I could see in the room was 10 doors. Each with a small round label above them saying 1... 2... 3... and all the way through ten. I knew this place, I'm not sure how I ever could have been here before but I somehow wanted to just walk right into a door and something weird would happen. All everyone could see was each other's confused and excited expressions on their faces, and I knew that we would have to go into a door. The hole in the wall with the projection was gone and somehow replaced by a solid iron and cement wall that looked exactly like the

projection. "Guys... what now?" I said. George started talking over the intercom; "We need to see where these doors all lead to." I walked up to door 5 and thought *this one...* "This one guys, come over here." I opened up the door and saw the most peculiar thing I have ever laid eyes on. It was the most interesting harmony of colors, and everyone gasped as I opened up the door. I walked inside without saying a word and then blackness took over... I knew something that the government didn't want me to. This whole thing was just something that wasn't real to me but they can't take away my memories... Unfortunately our story is coming to an end. Jett was born into the modern day life of 2012. He was part of a regular middle class family with nothing really extraordinary about this new self. But he had no recollection of what happened to him in the far future. Every person is different and every person has a story to tell. But something makes everyone unique, and this is how life just keeps going...