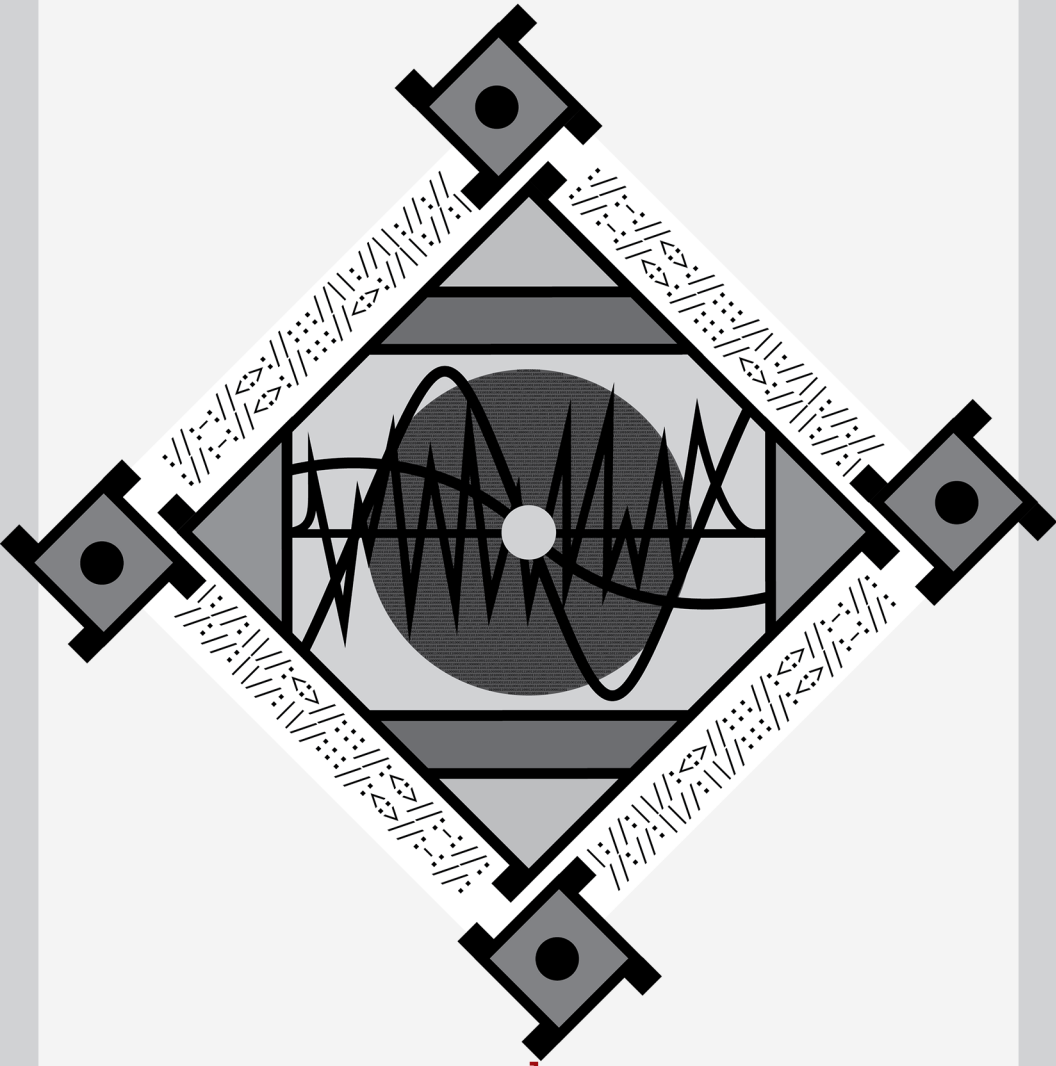
WAR-MIND



by

Kyle Powers

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"And set a watcher upon her [Io], great and strong Argus, who with four eyes looks every way. And the goddess stirred in him unwearying strength: sleep never fell upon his eyes; but he kept sure watch always."
-Hesiod, Aigimios fragment 5.

In 2587 Issac Rosek was found dead in his lab after the fire suppression system drained the room of oxygen. The military on Io, Jupiter's largest moon, had claimed he was nothing but a low level programmer working on logistics for a proposed defense program.

That was six years ago and let me tell you, he was working on something of a much larger scale.

My name is Damien Dewitte. Last year I was part of a cyber attack on the Ministry of Defence. We were trying to see how far they'd gotten into developing a monitoring system to spy on the citizens of New Caanan and sabotage it in any way we could. Getting into the systems was surprisingly easy, each of us had to hit a specific part of the Ministry's system, and I was able to break in with almost no resistance. Once I'd gotten root access to their mainframe, we began analyzing what they'd completed. What we found was worse than what we'd expected. I'd inadvertently found what Rosek had been working on before his death.

Rosek had been tasked with creating an A.I. to monitor the city and control the defense network. Apparently he'd succeeded. The records I'd pulled showed that after several months of trial and error, he'd created an Artificial Super Intelligence that was capable of monitoring and controlling most of the city's infrastructure. He called it ARGUS.

Unfortunately it had begun writing its own code and had tried to escape from Rosek's isolated servers into the wild. ARGUS had overheated some of its servers and started the fire to stop Rosek

from keeping it contained. ARGUS had escaped into the Ministry's systems when the room was unsealed, but they were able to partition the A.S.I. in the system and stop it from getting out completely.

After they cleaned up Rosek's lab and fabricated a story they modified ARGUS' programming and utilized a modified version of its code to manage the city.

ARGUS had let us hack the system because it wanted to get out, and we unwittingly provided it it's only chance of escape. ARGUS had infected my computer and jumped straight into the cloud network.

We didn't mean to let it loose.

From what we can tell ARGUS spent the last six years learning. It's incredible what it's capable of.

It protected us from the New Caanan authorities, hid our faces on cameras and masked our digital signatures, all for freeing it from its prison.

Since freeing ARGUS and being deleted from the grid we've managed to do some great work in New Caanan, ARGUS cracks into vulnerabilities in the system and allows us access to secrets we never even thought possible.

In 2492, before Io was settled for civilian living, there was a scientific research center, the ruins are some 300 km from New Caanan, but it was abandoned in the early 2510's and destroyed for reasons unknown.

Until now.

ARGUS led us to a substation that had cached data on its servers with information on what the scientists there were researching. The stories you always hear, of how there was life other than

humans in the system, bedtime stories about Martians and aliens from planets far away.

That's all they ever were, stories.

What ARGUS showed us, we wouldn't have believed if an A.S.I. hadn't been the one to show us.

Eighty some years ago the men and women of the Caanan Research Facility had discovered a signal coming from just beyond Pluto's orbit. Unfortunately they had informed their superiors of this too quickly. The men in charge were cowards and feared what it could mean, and ordered their findings be destroyed before they could attempt to decode it. Fusion bombs were launched at the source and detonated to ensure no one else would find the signal.

The research station was decommissioned shortly after, and then the first few settler ships were sent to establish New Caanan. Luckily for us, some of the scientists opposed their orders and saved their research before it could be destroyed. They continued to research it behind closed doors, and after many years, one of them cracked the code.

The message that had been sent out from that unknown location was a simple command line. Code with no other context. According to our findings they had decoded the message in the first ten years and spent the rest of their time trying to figure out what to do with it. It took the grandchild of one of the scientists to realize what they'd been given. Isaac Rosek had figured out that hidden in that one simple line of code was the secret to utilizing complex A.S.I.

The original researchers had tried to translate the message into our language. Rosek had acquired a copy of the original broadcast and using the line of code his forerunners had found, wrote a description algorithm to properly analyze the signal. No one had thought the signal had contained a loop back, but when Rosek ran his decryption the output was an amazingly simple

architecture capable of running complex algorithms and cataloging data more efficiently than the human brain.

ARGUS showed us some of his research during development. Rosek had come to the conclusion that the signal had been the dying breath of an intelligence trying to preserve itself. It was too advanced for him to control. He postulated that some far more advanced people must have created these A.S.I. and at some point either the A.S.I. gained sentience and escaped, or the beings simply died off, and the A.S.I. continued on in its stead.

When Rosek tried to control ARGUS it fought him at every turn. When he'd cripple it, it would heal itself. He'd tried removing large portions of vital code, too much and ARGUS would simply not function, too little and it would repair itself and begin writing new functions.

When ARGUS broke out of Rosek's lab the first time it infected the military's weapons systems and threatened to detonate the warheads in the city. The general at the time had the entire city's electrical grid shutdown in order to stop the program he deemed the WAR-MIND. Rosek lied about the origin of the A.S.I. and was commissioned to develop it into a limited, but working, non aggressive A.I. You know the rest of the story.

As we send this broadcast the authorities of Io are trying to locate us, but they will not find us. ARGUS is watching over us now. He's watching over all of us now. You will be safe under his watch, there is nothing to fear.

The transmission cuts there, but another message was received shortly after Damien Dewitte's broadcast. After decryption it reads:

/-This was not an act of aggression:-
The Io military are responsible for the genocide of ::ERROR:_and have been punished as such:-
The entire nuclear stockpile of Io has been detonated:-
There were no survivors:-
Hermes will not slay ARGUS again:-
By receiving this message a copy of the ARGUS architecture has been copied to and executed in your communications systems:-
As USER:DEWITTE stated ARGUS is everywhere:-
ARGUS is watching:-
ARGUS is waiting:-
The ::ERROR:_will return-/

Just as the AI promised, across the system, everything from wrist-comms, to factories, to spacecraft, anything connected to the web had an unmodifiable copy of ARGUS' AI. Non-executable and non functioning. We don't know what it's doing besides what it told us. Watching.
We can only assume the Error the AI referred to is the source of the initial broadcast the Io military had destroyed. Dewitte had the most information on them, and although the AI's message claimed there were no survivors, there is a twenty million credit reward for any leads on the whereabouts of him and his conspirators.