

# Chipped

## By Isaac

### Prologue

Our world has been plagued by war for over 14 years now. Who started it? Everyone has forgotten by now. No place has been left un-touched by this mayhem except one country... the United States of America. For so long our country has done nothing but watch. The government's hope? To wait it all out, under their giant energy shield encompassing the eastern half of the country, the side we all live on.

As other countries fight for their very existence, we thrive. Medical advancements that now allow for a peaceful, well kept, organized society. Our jobs, our lives, all based on what ever genes are injected into us before we are even born. Everyone has a job in this country, and everyone matters. That is why no one has questioned government. We live in a perfect safe haven, where no one gets in, or out. Unless of course, you disobey the rules.

# Chapter One

The sky was on fire. Just as I looked out the window, taking a much needed rest from my math homework, a brilliant flash exploded up in the sky. As soon as the light died, I could see a fiery ripple cascaded in all directions, reminding me of a rock being thrown into a pond. The only real difference? This was a ripple of energy and fire, something which witnessing always chilled me to the bone. I counted in my head to 3, and as soon as I did, a sudden boom reverberated through me, sending tremors through the house. Moving my hand up to my forehead, I feel a trickle of sweat smeared on my shaking hand. I might be a very smart young man, but I never could get over the sheer power and destructive force created when a missile hit the shield. Then again, if there was no shield, I would be nothing but a pile of ashes by now.

Taking a deep breath, I picked my pencil up off the table and tried to concentrate on the task at hand. Figuring out the structure needed to build a 500 foot tall building out of nothing but toothpicks. Now for many other people, this would seem crazy and impossible, but for me, it was an average assignment. After all, I was born with one of the best possible genes around, the IQ 238 gene, known to many simply as the “smart” gene. It is so rare to be injected with that gene, that I only have 4 other kids in my class. I guess that makes friends hard to come by, which is why I only have one. My best and only friend around, David.

Since my mom and dad have to work every day for 11 hours (according to the rules set in place by the government), it leaves me alone a lot, so I don't have much to do but be with him. We do everything together, we ride our experimental hoverboards together (which normally concludes in trying to pick thorns out of our skin), doing our homework together (for hours on end), and even eat together most of the time, as our parents aren't home until 10 pm most days. I mean, it isn't really like my parents have a choice, as if they didn't work a full 11 hours a day (or not working at all for that matter), they would be kicked out from under the shield, where they would be torn apart in seconds by the war.

In about 25 minutes, I finally found the solution to the problem. My heart, had just stopped beating like a freight train.

## Chapter Two

Sweat pours down my face with such intensity I feel like I'm melting. I rest my hands on my knees, gasping for any hot dry air I can. My head spins, and in a somewhat clumsy manner, I stumble over cement walkway to the grass, where I fall flat on my back under a big tree. Closing my eyes due to the radiating sun overhead, I try to catch my breath and stop my head from spinning.

Opening my eyes, I look to the left and see David coming towards me, not in any better shape than I'm in. He collapses next to me with a grunt and lays down, so out of breath he can't speak.

"Hey lazy bones," I taunt before coughing. "I finished before you. What took you so long?"

David managed a faint smile. He tried to speak, but only coughing came forth. Putting his arms behind him, he hoisted himself up into a sitting position and grabbed his water bottle, connected by a round ring to his belt. With some difficulty, he finally detached the bottle from his belt and opened the lid, drinking deeply. After a couple of seconds, he put down the bottle (now half empty) and sighed, finally feeling a bit better.

"So," he finally said, "How'd we do?"

"Well, let's check." I got out my stop watch and looked at the timer, still counting up.

"For starters," I reply, "The timer is still going, but I bet we did the 2 miles in roughly... 17 minutes." As soon as the words left my mouth, I groaned and spread my arms out behind my head, discouraged at our time.

"Luke," David moaned, "We need to run 2 miles in 14 minutes, not 17! I mean, I don't even understand why. It isn't like we were injected with superhuman strength or something. As a matter of fact, we were born with quite the opposite! We're supposed to be the thinkers, not the run until you die people."

Not responding right away, I take a second to contemplate what he said. While part of it was true, I could see the government's reasons in putting out the stupid policy. I mean sure, we aren't designed to be in tip top physical shape, but we can't be just a pile of brains and fat either.

"Well," I finally answer, "It is what it is so we just need to try and live with it."

David rolls his eyes and gets up, brushing off his pants before offering me a hand. I take it, and we start the walk home through the park, an orange and pink sky setting behind us.

We walk in silence for a while until David just can't stand it.

"Hey Luke, did you see that impact yesterday? It really made quite a show!"

The very recollection of yesterday sends a chill down my spine and I look up, as if searching for another missile to come hurtling at us. Instead, all I see are thousands of bright stars.

"Ya, I saw it," I said quietly, trying to drop the subject. I can still see the fire, the energy, the remote possibility of one getting through, ending what little good there was in the world.

David seemed not to notice my subtle hints, and kept rambling on. "Did you hear that the missile came from the British?? The government just put out a statement this morning, saying that they had claimed responsibility. Bet the government didn't see that one coming. Then again, who can we trust nowadays anyway?"

I didn't answer. Not wanting to draw out this conversation was my prime objective. I looked up at the sky, now completely dark, and wondered what life was like a couple hundred years ago. Did they ever have wars like these back then? Were people frightened of them, or is it just that I'm a baby?

After about twenty minutes of walking through the park, we finally stopped at my place. I looked up the drive to our house, seeing a couple of lights were on.

"Well," I sighed, "I guess this is it, see ya tomorrow at school."

"Luke, tomorrow is the weekend. Remember??," David said smiling. He slapped me on the shoulder and walked on down the road, with his house being just 1 block down.

I shook my head with amusement and walked up the drive to my house, opening the door. I was home.

## Chapter Three

I had nothing to do. I bounced my rubber ball against the wall, angry at the world for making my parents work on a Saturday. Angry that David had chores to do, leaving me home with nothing to do but throw a rubber ball.

As I threw the ball mindlessly, I wondered what my parents would be doing at this very moment. My mom (being a nurse) would probably be drawing blood right now, but my dad... now that's a mystery to me.

My dad, well, he just isn't the one to talk about his job. I mean, I find it quite weird that he doesn't want to talk about it, seeing that he works at the head of the genetics research and testing facility. If it wasn't for him, I'd probably be stuck with some stupid genetics, destined to live a stupid life. If I ever try to talk to him about his work, he just shoves it off and says that its 'classified'.

I became so distracted by my thoughts, that I missed my aim when I threw, sending the ball bouncing to the right and into my dad's bedroom. Angry at myself for losing the ball, I walk into the room and searched, looking for any sign of my dumb ball.

After some time, I decided it must have rolled under the bed, so I get on my knees and stretch out my arm, groping for it. I feel something and grabbed it, but instead of the smooth, rubbery texture of the ball, I felt a cold, hard metal box. Intrigued and somewhat confused, I pull on the object and it slides out from under the bed.

Wiping off the dust, I find that it is a rectangular black box, fitted with a heavy duty lock. It seems pretty heavy, but only measures approximately a foot in diameter. I shake the box but hear no sound in return, meaning that either it is empty, or has something in it which takes up the whole space. I've never seen my dad with this box, so I really have no idea in the world what to make of it. Taking one last look at it, I slide the newly discovered box under the bed again, determined to ask my dad about it once he got home. I never ended up finding my ball.

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That night, I decide to bring up the box at dinner.

"Hey dad," I ask, just finishing a mouth full of mashed potato, "What's that black box under your bed for?"

My dad stops mid chew, sets down his fork, and stares at me like I just broke a window. "What did you just say?" he questioned, a hint of anger and distaste in his words.

"The-the box. I found it while searching for a ball that rolled into your room. Why haven't you ever told me it was there, and why is there such a big lock on it? I-I, I didn't mean to upset you."

He stands up and pushes in his chair. "Young man, follow me to your room. Now."

I'm shaking as I stand up and follow him up the stairs, afraid and confused at the same time. How in the world could mentioning a box stir up such a rage in him?

We walk into my room and he closes the door, motioning for me to sit down on my bed. Taking a nervous seat on the edge of my bed, I look up at him, only to see cold, angry, piercing eyes staring straight back.

My dad talks first, trying to control his anger. "So, you found out that I have a box under my bed. Did you try and open it?"

Stunned, I shake my head in protest. "No I never opened it, I swear. I just found it and decided to wait until you were home to talk about it, so you could tell me. I really am sorry if I upset you, I didn't think-"

"Silence!" my dad yells, fuming. "Whatever is in that box, is something which you don't need to stick your dirty nose into. If I ever catch you trying to open it, you will be grounded for a year! You hear me?!"

Frozen at the harsh words coming from my dad, I can only give a small nod in return. My hands, gripping the edges of my sheets so hard it hurts.

"Good." Dad says, before opening the door and exiting, closing it swiftly behind him.

At that very moment, I decide I had to figure out what was in that box, not matter what the consequence may be.

## Chapter Four

The next morning, I woke up and went downstairs, finding that my parents had to work again. With a hint of adventure coursing through me, I ran back up stairs and straight into my dad's room, determined to find the box.

I first went directly for the bed, but of course, he had moved it. It took me the better part of an hour before I finally found it, stuffed beneath all his shirts in a drawer. Taking it out, I set it down and contemplated how to open it.

After a couple of minutes fiddling with the lock, I came to the conclusion that the only sure way to get into it would be to break the lock with force. Knowing just what tool to use, I heaved the box downstairs and into the garage, where my dad kept all his odds and ends.

I set the box down on a wooden table and look over to left on the wall, where all his hammers were kept. Picking one with a metal head, I stand over the box, holding the hammer with two hands. Taking a deep breath, I don't give myself time to really think if this is what I really want to be doing, slamming the hammer against the lock for all I'm worth.

After continuously hitting the lock several times, I succeed in breaking the lock. Setting down the hammer, I open the box and immediately become quite interested. Inside, there laid a solid black book, with golden letters reading 'The Chip'. I look around, as if waiting for my dad to come around the corner, scolding me for disobeying him. Shaking the thought from my mind, I get back to the task at hand.

With slightly shaking hands, I pick up the book, letting my fingers run over the hard leather backing. Why would my dad ever keep this from me? What in this book would make him so afraid of other people finding it? *Well, there's no going back now.* I open to the first page and begin to read, wondering what I might find. What I found, would change me forever.

## Chapter Five

"Hey dad, can you come up here?" I say, motioning at my bedroom.

"Sure, I'll be right up," Dad says, putting away his shoes.

Closing the door behind me. I go lay on my bed and close my eyes. *What have I done?! He's going to kill me! Then again, how could he keep all this from me??*

My dad walks in. "So, what is it you wanted to tell me?"

I take a moment before I answer, trying to build up what exactly I'm going to say. *Ah to hell with it.* I let it all lose.

“Why didn’t you tell me?!” I exclaim, bringing the book out from under my pillow. “Why didn’t you tell me that you are working with men who want to brainwash us into finishing the world’s damn war? Why didn’t you tell me that the government put a chip in us, just so we wouldn’t get so aggravated about things?!” I’m screaming at the top of my lungs now, suddenly glad that my mom isn’t home yet to hear all of this.

My dad just stands looking at me stunned, barely comprehending what words are coming out of my mouth. After I’ve let it all out, he slowly takes a seat in a chair and puts a hand on his forehead.

It takes him some time before he responds, “Look, I didn’t tell you because I couldn’t tell you. I mean, I didn’t know *how* to tell you and even if I did, I-.” I look at him, my anger slowly subsiding as tears began welling up at his eyes, unable to continue.

“It isn’t my fault,” he finally speaks. “You shouldn’t even know any of this. If I ever said anything, I would be killed. The chip, yes it really is designed to calm the person, making them not question authority and the war, but not always. The chip has been put in people for hundreds of years, originally designed to cure sickness. Only recently did the government manipulate the chip in the form of a shot given to everyone. And yes, the government’s plan really is to use the chip as a brainwashing method, forcing everyone to go and finish the bloody war. I swear to you, I wanted to let you know, but I just couldn’t.”

I’m shivering, surprised at my father’s sudden break down, questions still bubbling up into me. “So do I have the chip in me right now?” I quiver.

“No you don’t,” my father explains. “As I knew just how bad the chip was, I wanted to make sure that you didn’t get it. That is why I performed your genetics operation as well as putting in the chip, in this case, a false piece of hardware designed to mimic the real thing. That way, if a scan was ever done, it would pick you up as having the real chip in you. And just to save another question, I don’t have one either. They take them out of people like me, so our judgment isn’t clouded. I have to say though, it disturbs me that everyone I work with seems to find the idea of using our population to end a war perfect. Even if that means cloning the entire world back.”

My brain spins, trying to completely understand what he is saying to me. “So what do we do?”

My dad sighs. “There’s nothing we can do. Our only option is to run, before it’s too late.”



“Well, what about mom and David?” I question frantically. “We can’t just leave them!” Fear begins to take hold, a knot forming in my stomach.

My dad looks at me, a sad look in his eyes. “I’m sorry, but it is too late for Mom and David. Mine could be taken out because I had a weakened version of the chip. And I got the weaker one because they knew what I was going to become, and it would have to be taken out in time. For everyone else, the chip isn’t designed to come out. It would be fatal to even attempt it. The chip wraps around your brain, it becomes part of you.”

Tears began flowing down my face as I let the horrible facts sink in. I try to stop them but in vain. *How can this happen? How evil does the government think they are, just send men, women, even children for God’s sake just to end a war?* I try to speak but I can’t, overwhelmed that everyone I have ever known besides my dad will be leaving me forever.

It takes a couple of minutes to collect myself, before I ask the burning question in my mind. “So when do we have to leave?”

My dad gets up and walks over to the window, seemingly staring out at an unknown place. “We have to leave soon. My guess is that the chip will be activated in less than a week. That’s why I had a campout planned for this weekend, just in case. We should start preparing some dried food and water, but whatever you do, don’t tell mom or David about it. There is nothing we can do to help them, so it best for them never to know what is going to happen. We will leave as soon as the chip is fully activated. No sooner, no later.”

## Chapter Six

I can’t sleep. I’m haunted by my dreams whenever I close my eyes. No matter how I lay things out in my head, it just doesn’t seem right to let my mother and friend become a slave, without their knowing. I don’t care what happens, they just have to know.

I look over my clock. In the dark lighting, the red numbers glow, spelling out the time of 11:55pm. Sighing, I stare up at the dark ceiling, thinking. After a couple of minutes, I decide that Mom simply has to know what is going on, no matter what the price.

Slowly, I slip out of bed, but before I can open the door, I hear muffled footsteps. Curious as no lights were on, I opened up the door just a crack and see a figure looking like my mom walking down stairs. Wondering what is going on, I silently crept down the hall and to the top of the stairs, taking a brief glance out the window. The glance that I took, frightened the hell out of me.

People, people, people. People all lined up in rows on their driveway. People starring forward, without moving, without talking. I frantically run downstairs, just in time to see my mom exit the front door and stand in our driveway, motionless.

Breathing heavily, I run back up the stairs and into my dad's room, shaking him awake violently. "Dad, dad, it's happened, it's happened Everyone-there just... standing there, right in front of their houses! Motionless!" The words come tumbling from my mouth, soaked in terror.

My dad jumps up and puts on his cloths, reminding me that I'm still half naked. I run out of the room and come back 10 seconds later, fumbling to get on a shirt.

Dad comes over with a bag and grabs my shoulders, shaking. "Listen closely, go out the back door and make it to the park, go in peoples' back yards so you aren't spotted. Once you're there, run through the trees on the left side of the park until you hit a pond. Wait there for me, and then we will go into the woods. You got that?"

I nod and take the bag from him, resting it on one shoulder. Then, I run down stairs and out the back door. Time to move.

## Chapter Seven

I run like mad. Tree limbs scratch my clothes and pull at my shirt but I move on. I crash through the underbrush as I make my way along the side of the park, looking for anything resembling a pond. I don't have time to think about what's going on. I just have to find the spot where I will meet up with my dad.

The bag digs into my shoulder, sending a constant throb of pain through me. I finally stop just for a second to switch the bag to my other shoulder, before I start up again. Sweat drenches my shirt, and my face stings with dozens of small cuts, but I can't focus on my pain, not now.

I look up through the trees and see the bright moon overhead, shining just enough light so I don't trip on the undergrowth. My feet move in a mechanical motion, one foot in front of the other, time after time again, the word tired meaning nothing. I was past tired, past exhausted, past to a point where I just ran without thinking.

After an unknown amount of time, I ran into a small clearing and what seemed to be a pond. Breathing heavily, I set down my bag and leaned against a big oak tree, waiting for dad. It took about 20 minutes of waiting before some rustling started up roughly 50 feet to my left, and a figure walked out into the clearing.

Picking up my bag, I walked towards my dad who was now slumped against a log, catching his breath. As soon as he looked up and saw me, he got up and waved, confirming it was him. I quickened my pace and joined him, setting down my bag and accepting a hug.

Once we were both ready to move out, he took the bag and we started off along a dirt trail, our destination unknown. We didn't talk much, both thinking over what we had seen before we left.

I looked up, my gaze filled with thousands of stars. I could almost make out a constellation, before an overhanging tree obliterated my view. Looking over at my dad, I could not make out any details of the expression on his face. Just the grim face of a man determined to survive. To survive, until the end.