

The Last Book In The Universe

Chapter 1. *They Call Me Spaz*

If you're reading this, it must be a thousand years from now. Because nobody around here reads anymore. Why bother, when you can just probe it? Put all the images and excitement right inside your brain and let it rip. There are all kinds of mindprobes - trendies, shooters, sexbos, whatever you want to experience. Shooters are violent, and trendies are about living in Eden, and sexbos, well you can guess what sexbos are about. They say probing is better than anything. I wouldn't know because I've got this serious medical condition that means I'm allergic to electrode needles. Stick one of those in my brain and it'll kick off a really bad seizure and then - total mind melt, lights out, that's all folks.

They call me Spaz, which is kind of a mope name, but I don't mind, not anymore. I'm talking into an old voicewriter program that prints out my words because I was there when the Bully Bangers went to wheel the Ryter for his sins, and I saw what they saw, and I heard what they heard, and it kind of turned my brain around.

The Bangers have the latch on my part of the Urb, which means they control everybody and everything between Eastie and the Pipe. A million people, maybe more. Nobody really knows how many because nobody can count that high. Why bother? All you gotta know is, if you live here you're either down with the Bangers or you might as well be dead. There's no escape because every part of the Urb is latched by one gang or another. The only escape is Eden, and you can't get in there unless you're a proof, and if you're genetically improved you'd never leave in the first place, so forget about Eden.

I used to belong to a family unit, with a foster mom and dad and my little sister Bean, but that's over, and I don't want to talk about what happened, or how unfair it was. Not yet. The less said about that the better, because if there's one thing I learned from Ryter it's that you can't always be looking backward or something will hit you from the front.

Ryter was this gummy that changed my life, and if you're reading this maybe he changed the world, too. Gummies are what we call old people, and the Ryter was so ancient the hair on his chin beard was as white as bone and most of his teeth were gone. Even his skin was old and worn-out and so thin it looked like if you held him up to the light you'd see right through him.

The way I got to know Ryter is this: the Bangers sent me to bust him down. As far as I was concerned at the time he was just another gummy scheduled for cancellation, so why not rip him off?

And that's exactly what I did.

