

Chapter 10

Harris's eyes fluttered, the bizarre sensation and sight of the land cruiser surroundings fading out. Now, in a room, ahead of him he could see a tall, transparent cylinder. Within it was a small child, floating, perhaps eight years old, naked, except for a lot of wires and sensors. He became aware of people in the periphery of his vision, and a hand on his shoulder, a familiar touch. 'Hello Mark, take it easy, *take your time* in coming to,' in Femi's silky voice. 'What the *fuck* is going on,' responded Harris quietly, groggily.

'*Listen to Femi*, Mark, you'll be quite disorientated,' Jamestown added, while he and his Exec Team came into focus around him, as he lay on a black, padded gurney. His addled brain, trying to understand this turn of events, noted the cylinder child was thrashing, clearly agitated. Jamestown looked at the blue-eyed woman, who pushed a slider forward on a console in response. A calmness swept both Harris and the child, all agitation removed. Harris shook his head and took in more as the gurney's upper half elevated, sitting him up. 'What the *fuck* is going on,' he repeated quietly, feeling his face with his hands.

It was Schrek who responded, 'Just take it slow, Mark, you're experiencing a normal disorientation after being under for a while, your filament is recalibrating, you'll feel better momentarily.' And all the others crowded a bit closer into Harris's prone body, as if examining a specimen with evident interest and focus. Jamestown picked up from Schrek, 'And your memories will re-assimilate themselves as well, you gave us quite a fright, I can tell you!' And they all nodded in assertion to each other and Harris. Meanwhile, Harris felt his mind clearing, grogginess receding, though he still felt some background buzz.

'I have a *filament?*', Harris stated rhetorically. 'And what the hell is that child doing *floating there?*', much more forcibly. After a brief pause between all, Jamestown ventured, 'he's *yours*, Mark, your *organic* backup memory, linked to your filament, please do not be alarmed,' and with that Mark looked at him aghast. Again. 'Oh my, I remember more, now, yes, the next stage in the work, to absorb and retain the, *my*, cerebral matrix.' The tension around them all fluctuated, the group not knowing which direction Harris would take from here. 'That's right, *Mark*, ease back in as you recollect, don't dwell on your feelings,' Schrek stated, just as much to the whole group as Harris. The blue-eyed woman's fingers danced over the console, flicking switches and pushing sliders like a concert pianist.

Harris felt bizarrely calm, even though he could sense a revulsion at the fate of the floating child, and his own role in it. 'Ah,' he uttered, 'and this is *me*, isn't it, I *created this?*', as he shifted further in the gurney. There were no restraints, the filament much more effective. 'Yes, Mark, something you became increasingly conflicted with, so much so we needed to put you into a fantasy state to let your ego and id fight it out, hoping to return you *to us*,' explained Shrek. And that reassuring squeeze from Femi. 'Oh, *I'm back*, very much so,' Mark replied, quietly. And with that, all their eyes pulsed blue, each of them arrayed around Harris like the thread ends of a web. Meanwhile, the child moved as if back in the womb. Jamestown smiled, this time with his blue, so *blue* eyes.