

Eternal life vs...Life

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CHAPTER 1

The skin-covered lump of bones, tendons, muscle and fluids of various smells as well as consistencies lay before Doctor Michalovitch as he put his stethoscope on the area where all the books, and his decades of real life experience, said there was a heart. Despite the advances in science and devolutions in the muscle between the ears that had transpired in the last 60 years of the 21st century in the world around him, the aging but defiantly not-extinct old-fart medical dinosaur who had been practicing medicine still believed that the heart was stronger, and smarter than the mind, or brain. And, so far anyway, that intensity-conferring fluid-pumping organ still lay on the left quadrant of the chest rather than between the legs. The cardiac tissue in this patient, the one he was born with amazingly enough, was still pumping blood to organs that needed them at the rates required for ambulatory life, and then some.

But there was something it was not pumping out of Doc M's patient's heart, which was pointed out without hesitation by the soon to be retired 80 year old dinosaur. M, as he preferred to be addressed by his patients, had refused surgical intervention to hide any feature of his real biological age, from the rivers and canyons of wrinkles sinking deeper by the day into his sagging face, to his thinning yet still straggly white hair, to his knobby fingers which were driven to continue working as a healer at lightening speed because as well as despite of the pain they projected back to his brain when he overused them.

“Chi,” the old Physician said to his younger and far more pleasing to look at associate at Interglobal Newer York Hospital regarding the patient whose vital signs all said ‘A OK’ but whose eyes were now more than half way to that realm which still remained a mystery to all of those in the land of the ‘living’. “This man is dying because there’s no chi going through him anymore.”

“Chi, Doctor M?” asked the Resident. Though she had been in service for 20 years at that position, she had not aged a day since her first day of work as a ‘bio-maintenance’ officer. “I know what Chi is,” continued Doctor (and if she had anything to do about it, Professor) Olivia, as she was called by nurses, fellow physicians of her kind, students, patients and friends alike. She searched the data banks on the computer under her lab coat. Professor-Doc Olivia’s big, blue overly eye-lashed eyes squinted to read the print through her long, blonde bangs which framed her perfectly shaped face, which sat atop an even more perfectly shaped body, as it pertained to the aesthetics of any century, including the Dr. M lived in between his ears. “Chi is an ancient medical term describing something manifesting as electrical current, and movement of bio-magnetically elements of yet to be determined identity that directs, regulates and organizes molecules, organelles and cells to...” she read, faster than Doctor M could think as the print became smaller to her seemingly open eyes but closed mind. “...behave,” she concluded, proudly with a regulatory tone and orderly smile.

Frustrated by the sight of such beauty housing a brain that was tragically sterile, and even more frighteningly, fast, Dr M grabbed hold of the computer from Olivia. “Chi directs, regulates and organizes biological tissue to become ALIVE!” M screamed back. “That’s the way me and the other old farts wrote this wikipedia page back in----”

“---A time when medicine was crude, ineffective and technologically underdeveloped,” Doctor M, Olivia calmly reminded her superior in the manner of a superior.

“But a time when it was about people serving other people, using the fire in their belly to figure out how to outsmart and work with Mother Nature at the same time!” the old man belted out to the young resident. “When intuition, instead of logic, ruled! When we promoted life and not just studied it! When we busted a gut to not only get our patients out of their beds, but up on their feet dancing, stomping on grapes or trudging up a mountain they would fall down from again! When we opened our eyes so wide that the fire coming in set fire to the brain, and gave us Promethian answers that made us as insightful as the gods and more effectively compassionate than any Deity we worshipped, prayed to or asked favors of! Do you understand that?!” he concluded, hard earned sweat pouring down his face, and chest.

“Do you require me to as you say, to understand that?” Olivia asked, without a trace of emotion, emanating professional detachment in the manner that was consistent with her position, as well the scientific demeanor training Dr M received at a younger age, but refused to accept.

M took in a deep breath, considering how best to reach this, his most, according to some anyway, intelligent student. The one who the hospital staff was grooming to take his place when he retired. A retirement which was now mandated by law in six months, or immediately if the authorities saw through the forged birth certificate the old doc snuck through the hospital’s data banks.

The patient, identified by number in Olivia’s chart, emitted a death rattle in his breathing. Though he was only 30 years old, he clearly was on his way to dying. Not because of failed liver, kidney, brain or distribution of chi problems, but because patient 2308YJ3 lacked Purpose. A reason to continue. Dedication to a Cause that was bigger than himself, even though it had nothing to do with reality. Reality that the world as it had become valued anyway.

The brain scan meter showed defects in the patient’s Zapponian-Westfall-Vitalitus nucleus buried deep into the right and left cerebral cortex. Clearly, it was dull out disease. That still unrecognized malfunction of the Soul Mind that makes one lifeless, procedural, simplistic, and boring. And, most of all, a disease that makes one mindlessly happy. And why not? 2308, as his friends called him, had been raised by the most obedient and state of the art servants. A robot to drive him to school, then university, where another mechanical, non-biological mentor provided answers for every test he took, in advance of them being administered. ‘2308’ didn’t have to go to work to earn a living, as he had yet another robot that went to work for him, ‘who’ brought home the

money. And an additional robot at home to do the cooking, cleaning and complimenting for all he hadn't done all day. And a robot to recreate with as a caddy on the golf course and dance with at the bar afterwards. And a synthetic fleshed female android to take care of all of his biological functions, ranging from wiping his ass after taking a shit to providing an outlet for ejaculated sperm. But not a robot to do the dying for him. That, '2308' had to do for himself. As well as to make the final decision about how to direct his death, into the two directions which were now available as the 21st century was being streamlined into the next one.

Olivia read out standard lines one gives to a dying patient, providing all of the tactile stimulation to the appropriate places on the patient's body that provided comfort and relieved stress, according to 2308's profile. "Everything will be alright". "Death is another form of Life". "Your suffering will be over soon."

"That is IF the treatment we have in mind doesn't work," Doc M interjected, pushing aside Olivia with his knarly forearm, discretely trying to make it seem like he was effortlessly slipping into place to 2308, who was now his patient, servant and master. "And if this biological treatment I have in mind doesn't work, you will be blessed with the wondrous challenge of facing death straight on without desperation or fear. And to beat the reaper, and redeem whatever mistakes you make in life, you will become a channel for the wisdom that is only reached at the time of dying. And you can share those Insights with those of us who are still living, so humanity can keep living and be somehow...Alive, big A!" the old man who had somehow averted the messenger of physical death whispered into the ear of the 30 year old patient whose 'natural time' was coming to an end due to natural, or perhaps unnatural causes. Seeing that 2308 was seriously considering the proposition he had never really thought about, or been told about by anyone else, Doc M whipped out a consent form out of his pocket typed by his own hands, with official hospital letterhead of course. "And if this new medication we want to try works, or if it doesn't and you accept the NATURAL consequences of such, we need your signature,-" he continued, placing a pen into 2308's shaking hand, pushing the fingers around it.

"But if Doc M's newest experiment biological treatment fails, like it did for most of the others in this clinic trial," Olivia interjected, dancing rather than pushing her way between her medical superior and the patient they were both responsible for. "There is a less painful and more sustainable option," she gently related to 2308 in the manner of a mortal mother with an immortal, assuring maternal smile. She snuck in a contact of 2308's face, next to Doc M's offering. "One in which you will be transplanted into a synthetically-fleshed body that doesn't age. So you can live forever."

"Without experiencing the gusto of living with an Alive soul rather than a submissive, sedate, lifeless and obedient one," M interjected, blasting that passion-infused contention into Olivia's baffled and condescending eyes with a mixture of pity, and terror.

2308's bloodshot and jaundiced eyes, to the extent that they could assess and process the world in front of rather than behind them, osculated between the two documents, while.

Olivia and Doc M engaged in yet another unspoken dialog between them. In a move that surprised both docs, 2308 pulled his back up from the reclining, white bed, experiencing space between that final resting place and his own still vibrant flesh-covered spine.

“He’s making progress,” Doc M said to Olivia in early 21st Century Russian, a tongue that he was sure no one in the latter part of the century understood, nor used, as that Slavic tongue had now escalated in directly acquiring of English words so that it fit more easily into the increasingly technological times. “Some temporary progress, Doctor Michalowitch, I’m afraid have to admit,” Olivia added, in an emotionally detached but, somehow, not completely uncaring tone. Doc M allowed her truthful assessment to deflate his hopes in his latest biological ‘miracle cure’, which apparently were seen by 2308.

2308 lost control of his spinal muscular, falling back with a loud, hard and painful thud onto the partially upright mattress, He then slipped over on his right side, where his view of the world was, by human intention or some kind of divine design, confined to Olivia’s contract, losing the capacity for speech, then the ability to mouth inaudible words or grunts with his lips. “An alternative to the journey that, used to be the only option for us,” she said by way of explanation. “If you agree to it that is. With a ‘yes’ nod of your head.”

After careful consideration, so it seemed anyway, 2308 shook his head ‘no’ the her proposal for transplanted into a synthetically-fleshed body, then let his chin rest into the blood and vomit stained pillow underneath him. Doc M seemed happy for, and proud of the young man who would not have the opportunity to become an old one. Olivia was concerned, then, with ultimate reluctance, continued to describe to 2308 what he would experience beyond the veil on the way to the other side of the life-death line, according to the Tibetan book of the Dead, and other texts Doc M made her read. She related a plethora of ‘how to avoid taking a left turn into hell, an off ramp into purgatory, or a detour into the wrong next lifetime’ tips from the ancient manuals in a way that was clear, and, surprisingly more emotionally engaging than M could ever do it..

At that moment, Olivia seemed very human, to both 2308 and Doc M. A technological accomplishment, as she was, biologically anyway, a robot. Yet, a lot more to Doc M, for reasons he dared not admit to himself, or anyone else. But in the meantime, while Doc M was officially her boss, there was common purpose for the not yet forced into retirement old crotchety man and his still eternally young, and beautiful, humanoid machine. ‘2308’ held on to Olivia’s hand as if it were a fellow human’s. And why not?

The pheromones released from Olivia’s nose while she continued to council and comfort 2308 mimicked smells (and apparently images) in 2308’s childhood memories, as fished out of his olfactory cerebral cortex by the latest of M’s ‘dream viewing’ machines. Then her voice changed pitch and tone according to his parental profiles, matching, apparently, 2308’s auditory memories, completing the movie in 2308’s mind he was trying to put into focus. 2308 addressed Olivia with several terms of endearment, never once addressing her as ‘maternal unit’, as was the custom and habit of children in the later part

of the 21st century who wanted ‘in’ on the wonders it promised those who embraced technology.

Doc M, recalling that in times of war, most dying men yearned to see their mother rather than a life saving Doctor or a Soul-saving Avatar, watched Olivia send 2308 off into a coma, from which some patients actually did emerge, though most didn’t.

Doc M, who preferred to be merely called M, in the tradition of his favorite 20th century author, Kafka, wanted what was best for 2308 of course, doing whatever he could to ensure that the patient would make his own decision, rather than be cajoled or forced into decisions that even well meaning Doc’s thought best. Above all, for now anyway, M hoped that 2308, the once-Alive big A musician had gone into a past time, when spirits were Alive and robots had not been invented, or used. It was a universe and dream for the future that Doc M held on to as tightly as he could. Even tighter than his determination that he would find the cure for dull out disease, which was killing more humans every day, and which, if he wasn’t careful, would come back to kill him. Particularly if he taught Olivia, the robot who he hoped would maybe become humanized in some way (functionally anyway), too much, too early. She was, after all, perhaps the only hope for humanity to survive the technology that was killing it off, or its primary executioner. For reasons he dared not share with anyone else. Particularly her.

Of course, the most critical decision of all was an ancient one that preceded the invention of electricity, and some say, even the wheel. “To live a short, painful, accomplished and (so those who survive you say) glorious life or to live a long, uneventful, comfortable one.” It was a decision that Doc M, Olivia and perhaps 2308 would have to make very soon.

CHAPTER 2

The blast of fireworks in the darkening night sky filled its viewers with wonderment. They smiled, drank beer, hugged their most immediately-available loved ones, and waved red white and blue flags. Each 'rockets red blare, the bombs bursting in air' over the darkening skies over usually drab Long Island Sound was able to lull the spectators into awe, no matter how big or small those blasts were in reality. The weather was perfect for the occasion, the Telsa weather machines whose existence was now made public, having insured that the day's temp at the beach resorts was a perfect windless 78 degrees, a mild chill of 64 as the sun gave way to the moon and the stars. The aroma of popcorn, hot dogs and, yes, apple pie, permeated the air, now a manufactured gaseous mixture of sterilized oxygen and nitrogen with just enough carbon dioxide to keep the small amounts of plants and trees allowable to breath.

But there was one watcher of the celebration who didn't breathe easily, and certainly wasn't celebrating. According to her station, Svetlana Ivanowich-Pushkinski cleaned houses by day, and made messes under the sac for male, and selected female, clients by night. On this night, the thirty-six year old self-taught philosopher who was fluent in 9 languages, and twice as many socio-political perspectives, reflected upon what she had become since she had dropped out of law school the day she figured out that it had nothing to do with justice.

While cleaning up the beer cans, candy wrappers and pop bottles already left behind at the Newer York TechnoInstitute party for its most valued families, and clients, Svetlana caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. Yes, her hair was still long, wavy and disobeyed every rule of symmetry. Yes, she was still able bodied in all of her limbs, and had lost no faculties in the muscle between the ears. Yes, she had survived past the age of thirty without being replaced by a robot with more pleasing aesthetics. But, no, she had no lust for life, firmly established now as someone who endured living because she had to, not because she wanted to. No drive left to produce music of her own in a world where that wondrous combination of sounds was now being used to quench independent thinking and expressive feeling, rather than to promote such. No more ambition to continue writing her 36th novel, perhaps because no one had published her first 35, and, most probably, because no one was reading anything anymore anyway. Indeed, the art of putting words on paper, or screen, and asking the reader to imagine what they conjured up in the brain was...gone. Replaced by 'hologram' books, which played, in three dimensional sight, stereo sound and accompanying aromas. With three tailor made endings that matched the Myers Briggs profile of the reader.

But something in Svetlana said that she had to continue living, and strive to be Alive, big A. A challenging task indeed when the dullness of mind and deadness of spirit in the room amplified with each 'rocket blasting in air' to a crowd drawn into awe. Perhaps by some new invention put into the fireworks to deflate the fire from the Soul or all who were looking at them. An invention she would get the goods on and, with the scientific portion of her mind, or perhaps a scientist he could find who still was Alive, she could counter-act. But such would require, as the first step, going upstairs with a handsome

looking man with full head of classily-graying-black hair, and a Herclean muscular build under his professionally worn leisure attire that made him look more virile and vibrant with each passing year. Whether 'Mister Achillies', was a man, or a robot, or one of the experimental hybrids was irrelevant. He was high up on the ladder in Newer York Bio-Technica organization, THE company which made everything technological and biological in the later quarter of the 21st century both possible, and mandated. One rung below, so Svetlana hoped anyway, the top bosses, or boss who she was determined to convert, or inactivate though her still-human womanly charms.

Such were her thoughts and aspirations as Svetlana winked at Mister Achillies, slipped into the woman's room to change, after checking of course that Mrs. Achilles and the kids were shunted off by Mr. Achillies to the hot dog stand. Which, Svetlana hoped was handing out seasoned-meat made from non-human sources, this time anyway. Just as Scotland Yard always claimed to 'get their man' to protect a humanity the deserved security two centuries earlier, Svetlana was determined to extract information from each of her marks to serve a humanity that more than ever needed to be awakened from the slumber of spirit induced by Newer York Biotechnica's newest inventions, and state of the art lifeless Visions it was so good at selling to an increasingly blind world.

CHAPTER 3

The recently enlarged triple-decker auditorium was packed. The stage was big, the three story high screen bigger, the speaker small, physically anyway. John Newmann stood five feet 10, as measured by the tape measure in ancient times. Clad in a black, faux leather shirt and tight jeans of the same hue, topped off with black hair slicked back on his very white chisel chinned face, he projected the image of the handsome, successful male for all ages. This new man for an even newer age was the kind of 25 year old who never had to sweat and, unless the laws of the universe decided to invert themselves, would never have to acquire the ability to struggle. With minimal action of his slender fingers, he pressed the button on the remote control, flashing on the first image to the awe seeking crowd.

The first hologram burst out of the screen behind him. The characters, quite literally, jumped out of the two dimensional one inch thick supersized 'slab'. "So, there you have it," the new head of Universal Dimensions International, NON-limited, said to the amazed, amused and aroused crowd as a long eared creature once known as a hare ran around in circles, while a slow moving tortuous holding a net tried to capture him. "An old fable called The Tortoise and The Hare," he announced to the crowd that had never seen a either creature in the real world.

"The Tortoise, is a wise, contemplative and pensive creature who thinks about taking each step, several times, and then finally puts his ideas, postulates and desires into action," he said of the slow moving heavily shelled green creature with "Einstein" eyes. "Reminds us of the past. People who still live in the past. Who we all probably still know. They say these creatures have persistence. That they enjoy struggle, yearn to agonize, never 'give up the good fight' but....eventually...." The turtle stopped, rolled his head around, then flipped over, its flaccid, tired feet pushed out of its shell. "A heart attack, in this case, from having too much heart. Too much wise. Too much contemplative. Too much old. And not enough----"

The hologram rabbit looked at John, interjecting, as it looked at the audience, "---- Clever, smart, fast, easy and----!"

"----State of the Art," the congregation added, filling in the motto that made Universal Dimensions International famous, and rich.

"State beyond the Art, and Fart," John proclaimed, after which he snapped his fingers. The rabbit vanished into a cloud of magic light, which broke into as many rays as audience members, each of those rays entering the back door to their present bodies.

"That's right!" John said, boldly striding to the center of the stage, reaching behind him slowly with his ultraclean, manicured left hand. "A new kind of route for energy and data infusion. Up the anal cavity. So, when someone asks you how you came up with the idea, you can say---"

“I pulled it out of my ass,” came out of the all four corners of the imitation oak and synthetic steel walled auditorium.

“Which you all can demonstrate, as easily as I can, by reaching behind that sensation you’re feeling, so you can retrieve----” John said, placing his left hand above the cracks of his buttocks.

“---A real rabbit?” the dead tortoise begged with an echoed from its stationary grave, shaking its legs.

“Better than that, my dear, old, ancient and state behind every art and fart dinosaur,” John assured the tortoise as put it right side up. He then pushed the minimally resurrected tortoise towards a miniature coffin, as it struggled to resist. “If you stop resisting the gift of live I just gave you, we can put out of your, and our misery. Right?”

“Sure, boss,” the tortoise said, after apparently thinking about it. Without any help from John, the tortoise extended out its legs, walked toward the coffin and tried it on for size. It seemed comfortable enough. The resurrected shelled creature breathed a sigh of relief, extended his head, and laid it on a pillow. It emitted an electric jolt that blew him up into a cloud of green crystals which formed into a...rabbit. One which chased the original hare around the stage, finally catching him by ‘cutting him off at the pass’. Then, after several courting gestures which John, the original hare and the transformed turtle fell into each other’s bodies. Each part of their bodies fit perfectly into its partner in a romantic dance which merged into a visually arousing portrayal of human intercourse, Such brought tongues out of the mouths of the sex-craving audience members. To his amazement, the sight of the two romantically involved rabbits gave John a, as the old books so crudely called it, ‘hard on’.

“Transformation of the old among us into the young,” John proclaimed regarding the happy ending that was so visually appealing, due to the newest multisensory technology at his disposal. Reaching into his pocket, discretely trying to hide the emergence of his third leg under his jeans, John pulled out a rectangular black phone, displaying it to the congregation. “This small device, once coded into the genetic profile of the old, useless and obsolete, can turn this,” he said, flashing up a two dimensional image of a dated DNA helix on the screen, accompanied by a solo two century old piano recording by Glenn Gould of Bach, who represented the Old Mathematics. “Into this,” he said, after which he pressed an icon on the latest ‘miracle machine’. The two dimensional screen image evolved into a third dimension, as did the music. Music that floated around the room, somehow, adding orchestral harmonies, a steady neo-disco beat and complimentary melodies which, eventually, overcame the original Bach ‘tune’.

“Right?” John said, looking to his left, getting an thumbs up from a hologram of Meastro Gould which seemed real to the audience. And if the audience believed it was real, John allowed himself to do so as well.

“Yes,” John concluded as Meastro Gould skipped, danced, then flew to an instrument with five keyboards on it, continuing what some would call the ‘bastardization’ of the Goldberg Variations, but what was now a happy version that everyone could dance to. “We can transform anyone to anything. As long as that anything is...of course----” John held the microphone up to the audience.

“---Clever, smart, fast, easy and State beyond the Art,” the response in unison from every corner of the auditorium, each individual in it transformed into one of the herd. Except for two people in the back row, who slithered out the back door. Ahead of the two hologram rabbits and their sharp toothed killer hare progeny that went after them. Until they ran into the real arms of the security guards in the lobby.

CHAPTER 4

The interrogation room was lined by gold-rimmed mirrors on the inside, inserted into places where the individuals being ‘interviewed’ could not avoid seeing themselves, as well as feeling the presence of onlookers on the other side of those reflective surfaces. The padding on the walls absorbed all superfluous noise from the inside, most particularly the Sound of one’s own heartbeat which told you were alive. And the Thunder of Silence, which led the suspect to connect up to the Truth big T, about the questions asked, and themselves. There were of course olfactory aids which were of use to the questioner. They included the amplified smell of the fear in the sweat of the ‘guests’ in the interrogation room when asked questions they were afraid or refused to answer. And if that didn’t work as a lie detector test, there was the unmistakable aroma from the vents of...

“Ulioko extract mixed with...” Doc M said as he sniffed the air slowly being blow into the room from the vents on the floorboard, recalling memories of the gas chambers in Auschwitz that killed his dissident great-grand parents and the aroma of weed at indoor rock concerts which deflated the urge for true Revolution in his social activist grandparents, diverting it into mindless, ‘mellow’ mischief. A final intentionally-small sniff confirmed Doc M’s worse suspicions. “Yes, Ulioko extract mixed with the latest brand of Soma. Soma, of course being----”

“----the drug used by George Orwell in 1984, to make the masses in that FICTIONAL novel compliant, cooperative and happy, Inspector Rolland,” Doc Olivia, Doc M’s robotic assistant added, putting her hand over her superior’s mouth so he wouldn’t put his foot in yet again, or invite an electric shock bootheel to smash into it. “A literary comment on...”

“The Times which are NOT achangin,’” the old Doctor pressed out of his mouth, singing the song from two centuries back which was so forgotten that it didn’t have to be banned. “But which will change if any of us who are still alive have anything to say about it.”

“Assisted by those who they created?” Inspector Sean Rolland, a tall, not unpleasant looking man with a neatly trimmed oversized handlebar mustache and matching bubba belly asked the old Doctor. The thirty-two year old ancestor of Irish gangsters who rose up the ranks as Cops in Old New York after the Italians, Spics and Slavs were placed on the bottom of the totem pole noted that this ‘Bernie Sanders’ wannabe still had no smile on his face, despite the fact that he had breathed in sufficient gases from the vents. Either M was one of those suspects whose biology was immune from the latest tongue loosening elixir, due to intrinsic stubbornness, outlier genetics. Or, perhaps, he had taken the antidote to that mind opening and pleasing drug which the Resistance was working on, according to the most recent reports, and pharmacologically cajoled confessions.

“Doctor Olivia is trying to protect you from yourself,” Inspector Rolland said to the old fart dinosaur whose ugly (and even more embarrassingly, outdated) mannerisms,

disheveled clothing and intensity-possessed eyes fit so well, and pathologically, into the way 'old time' New Yorkers were in the previous century. The ones who lived to work, knew nothing of play, and died as masochistic crusaders for so many lost Causes, and, (thankfully for those in the present) uncompleted Missions. "You should trust her more. She has been programmed to have your best interest at heart, you know."

"A program that didn't quite work as expected, or planned," Dr M replied, turning away his head, staring into himself, sinking into an abyss. "Which is my fault of course."

Roland looked to Olivia, a robot who had never been known to lie or tell half truths, for an answer as to what dark hole Doc M had placed himself in. All she could do was shrug her shoulders in an 'I don't know' gesture that seemed accurate and (if assessed in human terms) sincere.

Roland leaned back on his chair, looked at the files in front of him, stroked his cleanly shaved chin, than edged his way forward toward the Doctor who, most certainly, would be a patient in his own hospital. For his good, and everyone else's. "Doc M," he said, addressing the old, still somehow alive dinosaur, in the manner he liked, and required if he was to answer any question that followed. "Why did you leave John Newmann's presentation, before it was finished? A presentation which requires your medical expertise for implementation. Using technology that was based on your own experiments way back when you were----"

"---More trusting of you than I should have been," Doc M grumbled.

"Your work on brain transplants was brilliant!" Roland offered, in a genuinely complimentary tone. "And soul transplants, as you non-reductionist say. Do you know how many lives you, and your colleagues, saved by transplanting cerebral tissue into new bodies at the time of dying?"

"I know how many lives I sterilized, and made more lifeless, boring and procedural," the old doc confessed, and related to the young Cop, his shoulders sinking deeper into his cringing torso. .

"You made them happy!" Roland exclaimed, placing his hand on the once valued biologist's arthritic shoulders, feeling the bone spurs under the wrinkled skin somehow still covering it. "By implanting human consciousness before it was lost into synthetic bodies you allowed people to live forever."

"To be burdened with comfortable, non-eventful, non-challenging, non-accomplished lives, that go on forever. Mindlessly 'happy'!" Doc M barked back. He then leaned into Roland, wagging his finger, his spine no doubt in tremendous pain. "You know there was a movie once. An image projected in only two dimensions which the viewer converted into three or more dimensions with their own imaginations. A movie called Plaza Suite where Jane Fonda as die hard, workaholic New Yorker was asked by Alan

Alda, playing an 'effortless success is the only kind worth valuing' soul dead Californian said---“

Rolland's implanted data seeking device in his own cranium brought up the quote instantly from Alda's Californian character, directed to Fonda. “You really aren't very happy in New York, are you?””

“No,” Dr. Olivia, interjected in the thankfully long departed Jane Fonda's voice. “No one in New York is happy, but at least they are alive.”

The delivery, as Rolland heard it, was accurate. But when Doc M repeated the line, it felt real. Indeed, there was something going on between Doc M and Olivia. Something very personal. But, according to Rolland's implant when he asked it by projecting thinking, as well as a quick message delivered on his keypad, it was irrelevant to the investigation at hand. Still, Rolland needed a few more moments to think about it.

“So, are we 'free' to go?” Doc M asked Rolland.

“After you tell me why you left the presentation early,” Rolland pressed, leaning in to Doc M.

“Because we were paged,” Doc Olivia said. “Patient 2308, in particular.”

“Who was dying!” Doc M said. “From a disease of the body that maybe I could cure this time when he wakes up from the coma. Within the land the land of the living.”

“But which, maybe you couldn't, Doctor Michalovitch?” Rolland pressed. “And even if your biological miracle potions do work, you could buy Patient 2308, what, another few years of 'life' as a mortal, suffering all of the slings and arrows of such? A musician whose music is never heard, appreciated, or, more importantly, paid for?”

“But music that is made, on his own fucking terms!” Doc M blasted back with a parched voice, which slipped into a body bending cough, which he refused to quench with a vial of hydroxyl-13-Calmex offered by his level headed assistant, and seemingly, friend, Olivia.

“We did give 2308, our patient, a choice,” Olivia replied, with a surprisingly sincere sounding human tone, hurt, offended and angered that her superior refused to take the pills she offered him. “The same one that Hercules was given in times of very very very old.”

“Yeah, to live a 'short glorious life or a long comfortable one,' according to the deluded but well meaning idealist, Doc M, who always increasingly was pushing for the former as the only viable option,” Rolland replied, with rolling condescending eyebrows. “But how did you and M word the agreement presented to this patient?” he inquired of Olivia.

“With a lot more humanism than you would, or would be afraid to put into the offering,” Doc M blasted back at Rolland before Olivia could give voice the words about to come out her mouth. He pushed his haggard, yet still somehow alive, torso up onto his two thin, knarled feet. “Which means this interview is over,” he declared.

“Yes, it is,” Doctor Olivia added, her young, attractive body springing up with alluring style and grace. Though Doc M could have used her help walking to the door, he preferred to hobble there, grabbing hold of the door handle with an already weak hand, unable to make it move. Olivia gave Rolland another ‘don’t ask me, it’s beyond my comprehension’ shoulder shrug accompanied by an inviting, pleasant and alluring smile.

The Chief Inspector who had perfected the art of putting on a poker face brought his hand up to his chin, as he started to feel expression coming to his lips for the first time in years. After considering the options at hand, he pressed the button under the table, releasing the lock to the door which M was still struggling to open. He ignored, for the moment asking whether 2308 decided to endure a short life as a struggling mortal engaged in the ever elusive *pursuit* of earth shattering accomplishment and vitality, or the assured experience of contentment as a compliant, non-rebellious and happy robot who would live forever. Such information was available through standard data channels. But there were, as the old and thankfully dead old time detectives said during times when ONE headed finned creatures swam in Long Island Sound as well as the ocean beyond it, ‘bigger fish to fry’.

With his two most recent suspects out of the box, the elder of them singing en route to the underground exit door ‘The Times They will Be A Changing’ more out of key than the original artist who wrote that naively hopeful historical tune, Rolland considered his own options. Considering who he was, and should be. And what would happen to him, and his legacy, in the years and decades to come if he didn’t locate the key leader in the resistance...and fast. Particularly as he felt his own blood moving pump pounding within his chest.

CHAPTER 5

It was a dangerous game for Svetlana Ivanowitch. She knew all too well what was at stake as she worked her way up to another ‘player’ in the ‘love for blackmailable info’ contest. The best spy for the anti-robotization Underground came well equipped for this next round in her most effective ‘persona’. The red-haired beauty who, with minimal adjustment on her natural presentation, was the visual envy of any human or robot twice her age cajoled the next ‘client’ into the East Hampton Beach House she had creatively acquired for the night with a warm smile, a wiggling ass, and stolen American state of the art recording devices buried within her vaginal cavity. If the mark she was luring into revealing State Technology secrets, particularly about the brain-soul implantation into synthetic material (BSISM) program, was a robot, there was a danger of asking the wrong questions in the heat of the moment under the sack. If the mark was a human, who was smarter than she was clever, he, (or she) could extract info from Svetlana about the Underground Resistance. Particularly if that mark was John Newmann, the new techno Brainiac behind the technology that promised immortality, comfort and happiness to all who embraced it at an unprecedented level.

“Nice place,” the latest super suave, highly placed, and always praised member of the Newer York Institute commented regarding the digs Svetlana had procured as her own for the night, thanks to knowing where the real owners were on this ideal night for love making. And of course the clandestine cooperation of a blackmailed member of the American Economic Security Agency who wanted to keep his wife and children in the dark about what he had done with Sventlana one dark and stormy night, through which she was able to make a fake key, a fake credit card, and fake identity, worthy of the master forgers in her own Russian ancestry.

“Yes, very nice place, Elizabeth,” John Newmann continued as she turned on the lights in a succession that matched the beats of the classy but not slutty seductive music that came out of the speakers at a volume that penetrated into the heart but didn’t blast into the ears.

He gazed up at the high ceilings unapologetically adorned with Greek style gold trimming, then become spell bound by the view of the gently breaking Atlantic surf illuminated by the moonlight, then dropped his jaw in awe when Sventlana turned on the diamond and safire studded chandelier reflecting every color in rainbow, merging into the hue of ‘opulent’.

Clearly, Svetlana thought, this ‘innovator of the new technology’ was not as rich as he seemed to be to his admiring and envious public. Or maybe miracle rags to riches protégé John Newmann really was used to living in a small, low ceilinged laboratory, dined on take out pizza and Sino-Siberian fast food, ‘desserted’ on the most attractive graduate students and female robots available, with an unlimited research and ‘fringe’ budget, as long as he was at work 24/7. No wonder ‘Maestro’ Newmann was so easy to pick up at the reception after his latest world broadcast public presentation at the Grand Global Auditorium. It would be ‘easy as pie’ to loosen his tie and tongue. Particularly

after Svetlana's pure blood ancestral Cossack Underground Revolutionary Comrade (and on-off-again Soul Mate) Vladimir, had earlier that evening spiked the drinks imbibed by John Newmann's towering, muscular and well armed entourage of assistants with old fashioned vodka while passing himself off as a mindless, soul-less and 'happy to be of service' synthetic-fleshed waiter.

But, there was a job to do. Svetlana knew all too well that in the arts, no mental pain, no gain. And when trying to do something innovative and sustainable in the world outside the arts, no risks, no results. Yes, it was very dangerous for Svetlana when she turned around to her guest for the night, as Elizabeth Holmes, unbuttoning the buttons on her blouse, then doing the same to, and for, Newmann, lightly stroking the hairs on his chest with her nimble fingers. And it was even more dangerous when Svetlana licked his chest, then looked up into his piercing eyes, which seemed more viciously black than adoringly blue. It was even more dangerous when Svetlana kissed him, on the lips, pretending that he was Vladimir, so as to fake sincerity as most effectively as possible. It was even more dangerous when Svetlana's tongue became entwined with Newmann's, as she felt the Chi in his lower abdomen merge with hers, as he became John. Then, as she felt his strongly muscular but not brutishly large arms pulling her into him, feeling him to be someone beyond a mark. Then, when opening her eyes, and allowing them to become drawn into his ocular portholes, seeing, feeling and even smelling someone who was more of friend, and lover, than anyone, even Vladimir. Then, allowing HIM to lead her to Master bedroom, the location of which John, or whatever he had become, seemed to know better than she did. As if they were both husband and wife, in this lifetime as well as several before it.

John seemed to be the 'teacher' in this lifetime, and Svetlana the student. But, as long as he kept calling her Elizabeth, Svetlana would be in charge of what was talked about, and recorded in the devices hidden in her most private female cavities as well as behind the alluringly visual painting on the wall behind the bedpost. And passed on to the Central Committee of the Underground Resistance. Secrets about the real technical power and power structure of the present American Establishment which, if found out, could enable the viciously hunted underground members in hiding to survive another year, and not be 'cajoled' into being killed, or worse, transplanted into synthetically-fleshed robot bodies which would devitalize their spirits and turn them against their most beloved friends, family and Comrades. And to, perhaps, somehow, some way, liberate the bulk of humanity that had already been transplanted into such robots, or who eagerly were waiting on line to be 'processed' so as to avoid disease, suffering and death that now afflicted most humans over 30. But, Svetlana has secrets too, about herself, the Underground, and Vladimir which, if found out, would enable John Newmann and whoever his real bosses were to completely colonize the world, transforming it into a stress-less, challenge-less, mindlessly-happy, sedate 'paradise'. Thankfully, the cyanide capsule which was always within a quick grasp would prevent such from happening, explanations to 'Saint Peter' at the Pearly Gates for taking her own life to be dealt with later.

CHAPTER 6

Olivia was trained to be logical, reasonable, accommodating and above all dutiful to those she was assigned to be responsible for her . There was so much about human interaction that Doc M, known in his younger days as Ira Michalovitch, didn't know now. Like to smile when he was happy. To laugh when he thought a joke was funny. And to know the difference between pontificating to the next generation, or just talking to a child. This Saturday was no exception.

It was an unusually hot day, made even hotter by the sun roof on the exhibition being fully exposed to the hot rays outside for this pre-scheduled historic event. An anniversary of a special day 25 years ago when the last establishment called a 'store' in New York was officially closed. A state-sanctioned and industry-funded celebration portraying, with pity and disdain, the dark, primitive days before 'shopping' became sending something through the mail involved dematerializing the item at sending end, sending the scattered molecules through the electromagnetic channels, and having it materialize in its original form at its destination. Yes, the museum of 'stores', the most 'inefficient, and labor intensive way to obtain goods'. Places where people had to go to in person to see things before they bought them, rather than merely punching up what they wanted on their computers and have it delivered by drone. Or, in more recent years, just think about, their electromagnetic thoughts picked up by the Newmann's newest 'Santa's list' implant, easily transplanted into any human brain for no charge as well as extra buying points for items purchased.

A girl of no more than 8 years of age had the misfortune of confusing M as her grandfather, returned from exile 'somewhere far, far away'. The child who 'accidentally' ran into him when running away from something he didn't see, and actors dressed as artificially-overweight historical 'mall cops', had natural long, wavy blonde hair and wide open big blue eyes. She was clad in a dress that allowed anyone to see what kind of beauty she would grow into. The innocent angel with an aura of intelligence which nearly blinded M's tired eyes, was fascinated with what was in Ira's hands as he bowed to the period-dressed vendor behind the counter, then strolled the corridor of what used to be called a strip mall.

"Is that ice cream?" the child asked, as intensely inquisitive as she was innocent, and eager for new experiences, as the 'Mall Cops' were diverted into an all you can eat burger and beer concession stand, displaying for entertained spectators how 'bubba bellies' were made, and how they caused you to die of a heart attack while growing them. "With what are those little pellets and colored beads on it?" the young runaway continued to M, pointing to cones in his hand, one of which he licked with delight, the other he was determined to have the frowned -lipped Olivia try, just once.

"Yes it is, chocolate chip ice cream with sprinkles," M, activated into being 'Ira' again with the first lick, pointed out to her as bent down, offering the young girl a whiff of the ancient delicacy which was banned from the children's menu at every elementary school in the country two decades ago. "And ya know what's significant about this ice cream?"

And the sprinkles and the chocolate chips, all different but somehow working together?” Olivia noted Ira saying, his intense stare turned abruptly away from the girl, the cone and her. “Do you know why ice cream materialized in our consciousness and in the multi-perspective realm we call reality?”

“To eat,” Olivia pointed out, picking up on her ‘master’ M’s request, and maybe something in herself she didn’t recognized. She she took a lick from M’s cone, swallowing it into the mouth that was programmed to enjoy whatever was placed into it, then displaying a big, wide smile of delight. “And to enjoy eating,” Olivia, indulging in another lick, emitted a wide smile of enthusiastic approval. “See?” she continued, placing that cone in front of Doc M’s intensity-possessed face, the flavor of that ice cream being what he enjoyed most when he was, according to his prematurely ‘accidently’ killed brother’s privately shared memoirs, a carefree kid named who enjoyed being called Ira.

“I do see, as should all of us,” Doc M said, any “Ira” in him vanishing into air like an early morning summer mist blown away by a harsh, no-nonsense winter wind. Ignoring the girl, the ice cream, Olivia, and now a crowd of ever curious onlookers, including the REAL security police that were looking on (so far, with only mild curiosity), he allowed himself to be pulled into ‘Professor M’ lecture. Fully knowledgeable of the subject matter but oblivious to the fact that there were no students in front of the lectern, except, perhaps, maybe the scholarly woman inside this angelic girl. “This ice cream is to be enjoyed, but how is it to be enjoyed? How do we build on the miracle that this thing which is kept cold can stay in one shape on the hottest day of the year? And what does ice cream represent? Especially black chocolate chip with yellow sprinkles and white ice cream? Unity and diversity! Unity of all races of people, and even people who aren’t completely people anymore, that we used to call robots but now can’t because it’s offensive to them, so they and their inventors say? And ya know why? Ya know what you really need to do to investigate this inquiry between the three of us even better!!!?” he continued with an unbridled sense of welcome to this next ‘special student’.

“To eat this chocolate chip with sprinkles vanilla ice cream!” Olivia growled from her the back of her throat, stepping on Doc M’s foot. She then grabbed the ancient (according to the sign above the period dressed vendor) ‘to be looked at but not eaten’, dessert, and in a swift, decisive and gracefully musical movement, and placed it into to the little girl’s quivering hand before she could make a mad dash getaway, from him.

“Mmmmm,” the young ‘student’ who had wandered into Doc M’s lecture hall inadvertently said after the first bite. “I like this. Because----”

“---It’s different,” Doc M interjected, extending his hand out to the girl’s non-eating arm. “And if you want to come with me, you can walk, Olivia can dance and I can hobble over to the next museum display where they have something called pizza, which is---“

“----Nothing you or anyone else is going to eat today,” a large framed middle aged man with super large musculature made to look three times larger by a tight fitting dark green uniform, said as he grabbed hold of Doc M’s other arm. “Especially this child, who--- ”

“---Is with me,” Olivia replied, emanating maternal energy.

“And you are?” the guard inquired, staring into Olivia’s face, as well as the circuitry behind it.

“Her maternal unit,” Olivia replied, calmly, her arousal circuits held in check.

“Which in ancient times, means her mother,” Doc M offered in a loud, early 21st century Brooklyn diction that had become both obsolete and ridiculed.

“And ‘this’ is?” the perhaps naturally or perhaps synthetically fleshed guard, said as he sized up the Olivia, then M.

“My...father,” Olivia replied, maternally hugging her hunchbacked about to lash out ‘master’ as if he was a defective psych patient. With delays in her response which were no doubt due to her being new to lying, at least in this way. And for motivations she seemed to be discovering, and terrified of. “My eh...father...who eh.....needs to be eh...”

“Taken back to the psych ward, before I embarrass my daughter here, I know,” Doc M conceded, with an acting performance that even Olivia seemed to buy as real. He then turned to the little girl, who accepted Olivia’s open armed hug, as a child would to the adult who gave birth to her, and took responsibility for that accidental and/or loving act. “And so I don’t cause any more young children, human children I assume, to suffer more agonies in their short or long life than they have to,” he said to terrified girl who, he hoped, would be assured by what he was saying with his eyes and not his mouth. “Angela,” he continued, hoping she would accept her new name, for the present ‘game’ anyway. “I’m sorry I scared you.” He squatted down, enduring even more pain in his ‘officially fine’ arthritic knees, then lay his hand gently on her shaking shoulder.

“You didn’t scare me, grandpa,” the girl said with a bold voice, to hiding her fear behind it, from the guard anyway. But, as both M, and apparently Olivia, saw as clear as day, a fear of what? Apparently something more than having a stranger give you strange food, and calling you by a name he made up. A name she seemed to be willing to accept, without question. “I’m alright, really, Sir,” she assured the guard as a true child of the Upper Caste would to a valiant and dedicated servant.

Olivia’s cerebral circuitry could not determine if the guard was a robot, a human or the experimental new hybrid in between. He stared at, and into the girl, seeing nothing off with her after a final assessment. Then at Doc, with more pity than disgust. Then at Olivia, admiring her beautiful youthful feminine features more than her ‘maternal unit’ essence.

“We’ll be going home now,” Olivia said to the guard before the third ‘inspection’ of her perfectly shaped breasts, hour glass figure and long auburn hair. “Me and Angela, and---”

“---Grandpa will be going back to the mental hospital, so he can maybe get better,” the blonde, blue eyed young cherub interjected with the authority of an Arch Angel, or Demon as she pushed herself into Olivia’s chest, eliciting a maternal hug, relating to the heavily armed guard ‘children before potential lovers, for now’. “Right, Grandpa?” “” Angela’asked Doc.

“For you, anything,” Doc replied to the girl he now adopted into his family. One which, maybe he was imagining all too intensely as being real.

With that, Olivia led ‘Angela’, and Doc to the entrance way or the historical exhibition. As soon as she was out of range of the security guard, and his buddies, she whispered something to Doc, in Greek. “So, ‘Angela’ who is she and why is she here?”

“We’ll all find out, soon enough” the young girl replied as a very experienced woman, in that ancient and all but forgotten, and now forbidden, Hellenic tongue. Such assured Doc. It drove terror into every circuit in Olivia’s cerebral, and now visceral, circuits.

CHAPTER 7

“So, how was your date with Elizabeth Wentworth last night?” John Newmann’s boss asked him over his ear bud as his new Air-Floater Magnus zipped then finally zagged into his parking spot at the warehouse, then opened the doors to allow him entry into the Newest Jersey People’s Benevolent Science Institute, its real location, in what still was the forgotten borough of Staten Island, being known to a handful of biological humans and not many more synthetic fleshed ones. “How hot is she?”

“Hot enough for a cool dude like me to handle,” the young stud bragged as he boldly stepped out of the latest model hovercraft, which contracted into a drone 1/5 of its original size so it could make its way through the vehicle-cluttered and expanding electromagnetic-transmuting channel atmospheric outdoor storage space, once occupied by oxygen and winged creatures known as birds. “And too colorful, intense, and off the charts to be of any interest to you, personally that is. Elizabeth is a real, and genuine, outlier who DANCES to the beat of her own drummer, with a new song every passion filled night.”

“Who got you to talk like you’re from a past, obsolete and soon to be forbidden era, John BOY!” the wonder child’s superior admonished in a godlike tone through John’s designer earbuds. “The next thing you know, you’ll be using expressive expletives that are based in the lower emotions.”

“No fucking way that’s going to happen,” John asserted as he put his thumb print on the door to the innermost corridor, commanding the metallic steel wall in front of him to open up with his eyes and upturned chin. “It’s just that I’m on this mother fucking Mission to find out where the Goddamned underground works from, and what shit they’re about to fuck up next, or try to anyway. And I have to fucking goddamn try to not sound like a dumb shit around them, once I find them. Right?”

“Correct, John,” the austere voice from the other end of his earbud admitted, as John entered the windowless complex. “But are you in love with her?”

John stopped so dead in his tracks, that his self-messaging faux leather shoes ceased to undulate around his feet, forcing his soles to feel the hard, cold ground of the facility.

“Well,” the boss, or so John let him think he was, asked, now from three loudspeakers overhead, in baritone stereo. “We’re waiting for an answer,” ‘He’ continued the command through several other echoed voices obtained by scanning John’s cerebral memory bank. They were both male and female, representing the archetypical sounds of gods and goddesses intrinsic to his East Indian-Greek genes, as well as the ‘masters’ of the universe who John had seen on screen as a kid. Many of them were the ones he had used on ‘Mortals vs. Immortals’, the 5D reality game he had created that brought him into the inner circles of the ‘Immortals’ who controlled the entertainment industry, and therefore all other businesses and endeavors of group-oriented humanoids. “Are you in love with Elizabeth?” the gods and goddesses in the hidden Penthouse office on the other

side of the loudspeakers, and John's most believed imaginations, demanded to know in voice, then through a multi-faced, multi-bodied hologram on all sides of him.

"It's a functional relationship that works for both of us, in the best interest of both of us," still mortal superstar Newmann defiantly said to the images outside his head, and inside it. "And, of course, Your Agenda as well," he continued, bowing to them before they got angry, or worse, they decided to abandon him.

"And what if her real name isn't Elizabeth?" a very human voice from behind John said. He turned around, noting that the synthetic-fleshed messenger from the gods and goddesses was none other than himself. "And what if she finds out who, or more dangerously, WHAT you really are, hmm?"

John's alter image, perhaps a visitor from another dimension, or perhaps another hologram which you could feel as well as see, waited for an answer.

"My day job is to infiltrate the underground. Which I'll do, because I have to," 'real life' John replied after a pensive delay. "And my night passion was to investigate my own Agendas with Elizabeth, even if she isn't Elizabeth, because I want to, and I deserve to," he asserted.

"Why?" 'other' John quickly inquired, demanding a real and comprehensive answer.

'Real' John took in a deep breath, allowed fire and form to reach an agreement as both went down to his spine then up from his solar plexus, and released from his mouth, "Because without me, 'other' John, you wouldn't exist," he said to his 'double', forcing his smug smirk into a compliant tightening of shaking lips. John then looked up at the holograms of the 'immortals', stating, accurately and passionlessly, "And without me, you wouldn't exist, Right?"

The gods and goddesses above, and within, John slipped into a murmured conference between themselves that lasted, in earth time anyway, 6 seconds, then voiced, though their male leader, "Yes, you are right, John, for now."

"For now is all I need," John replied the powers that be. "To take care of my own agenda, mine, and," he continued, looking to alternative Universe John. "Even yours," concluded, with a voice reeking of certainty, and an assuring hand on his shaking and downturned shoulder.

'Other' John smiled, with gratitude, to his real life twin, the master of the moment. While that Master wondered how long that moment would last, he waved 'goodbye' to other John, the gods and the observers from the other side of the next wall in front of him, who opened up that steel and electro-magnetic force curtain to the 'workshop' where he was to get the latest intel on the whereabouts of the Underground who were dedicated to burying everything John valued, stood for and aspired to be. At least in the present super tech global reality John lived in, and had been so instrumental in creating.

CHAPTER 8

Doc M's home was not so different than his office at work, though it was seldom visited, or slept in. But, Angela, his new grand-daughter, student, protegee and/or life assigned patient who he had to save from admission to his own now government controlled hospital, wanted ice cream, a bed to sleep in where she would not be haunted by 'demons', and a haven where she would not be hit in the face anymore or wacked in the wrist for saying, or even thinking, what she was feeling. The make-up she or her previous 'guardians' had put on her face and arms had washed off in a heavy rain, revealing confirming M's most feared suspicion---scars inflicted by human fists, hand held hot rods as well as laser-powered mind reading, and changing, electrodes.

"Make yourself at home, Ang," 'Grandpa' M, as he now was being called, said as opened the squeeking door to the one and a half story wooden private 'getaway when you can get away' beachhouse in what had been Atlantic Beach, during the days when the ocean was more water than floating plastic. A summer, then winter, temple which his hard working immigrant Slavic grandfather had build, and his 'effortless success is the best kind' American born father had nearly destroyed in an attempt to collect the insurance money. "Help yourself to anything in the fridge," M said of the ancient foods he had somehow concocted with modern age ingredients to the thin, child whose stomach had been growling ever since leaving the 'This is what stores used to be and are no more, thankfully' Exhibition. "And any books on the shelves," he continued, to the firey-eyed girl who on the long walk home, through detours he intentionally took so not to be followed, never ceased asking him questions, Questions about how the world was when green was a color that grew out of the ground rather than what was painted on a steel or hologramed wall. Picking up three leather bound volumes with no titles on them, and blank pages in between the covers, he continued, "Especially the books that----"

"----You write yourself," Olivia interjected, continuing Doc M's sentence, using his exact words, but with a tender, loving child rather than the proud, assertive tone for a protégée which Doc had been addressing her. Such was not new for Olivia to do, as it was her job, seemingly self assigned now given the rapid growth of her cerebral circuitry, to correct any of Doc M's miscalculations or mistakes before they would cause bigger problems than aging but ever defiant rebel could handle. No, this time Olivia was GENTLY encouraging to Angela, both in voice and action. "Do you see this?" she said, lifting up a rod from Doc M's cluttered desk, which had an ink dispenser at one end and a clicker at the other, placing it in Angela's right hand, a blank book into her lap. "It was called a pen, in its time. And the marks you make on this paper with it remain forever."

"Yes, I know," Angela answered, with a voice that was both ancient and young. It reminded M of the time when he was Ira, seeing a newness in the sunrise coming over the ocean while feeling how old that cycle was.

As Angela wrote down her thoughts, aspirations and wishes, in a language M didn't recognize, and Olivia struggled to make sense of, he was brought back to a golden time

when he and his wife had fostered a runaway child not that much older than Angela, nearly four decades ago. A runaway, sibling-less orphan who had been abused, ignored and hunted by a family of cultists whose religion and view of the world to come had thankfully been erased from the annals of written history. During those golden, and challenging, times early morning meant long walks with 'Angela 1' on the beach populated only by seagulls, misfit fishermen on the jetties and fish that had the misfortune of being caught by the former two sets of hunters that were dances rather than the strolls, rather than runs to the hover-train taking commuters to work. It was a time when the sun rising to its pre-assigned and voluntarily accepted position in the sky shone down upon an idealistic scientifically-trained Ph.D., M.D. 'mentoring' the bruised, battered, and sometimes self-mutilating runaway in physics, biology, the psychology of politics and the neural mechanisms of metaphysical thinking. Back at the bungalow, with the blinds to the outside world closed, M's musically trained and naturally over-literate wife had showed that girl, (whose head had been shaved but not brainwashed) as well as the double doc 'genius' M had thought himself to be, how to use the artistic side of the brain and activate the Alive portion of their souls. After a sometimes well cooked but always appreciated supper, the young runaway who was inoculated with so much human pathology showed off the music she had composed to her rescuers before lunch, the books she had written after lunch, and her ever expanding theories about how the human psyche, body and collective 'mind' of the political arena worked. The rising of the moon at midnight was a time for star gazing by the self-exiled trio, each losing themselves in the infinity of space above, yet somehow finding themselves in each other.

All of which ended when Doc M came home from work at the research hospital in Manhattan, and its adjoining Brooklyn based university while it still was a learning rather than indoctrination institution, eagerly anticipating his biggest reward---- being greeted by two hugging Alive, big A, fellow humans. Instead, he was met by a team of Policemen who asked him if he knew anything about why or how the runaway girl, who chose to be called by the male name Promethius, lay dead on the front yard, the sign of the devil serving cult branded on her forehead, with a headshave that went an inch below the scalp this time. And why M's, wife, whose name was Olivia, lay in a hospital bed at intensive care, two floors down from his research lab, in a coma which no doc, nurse, shaman, or miracle drug could get her out of. Solidly 'locked in' to a body that could feel everything, but could do absolutely nothing except very involuntarily move oxygen into the lungs and pump blood into her arteries.

"Is something wrong?" modern day Olivia asked M as his proud, joyful eyes turned into a source of mournful tears streaming down to his quivering lips while watching the long haired Angela, feeling and somehow logically assessing that she was an incarnation of Promethius, discovering herself and the World deeper and deeper with each discovery coming out on the page in not-yet-translated print. "I sense a mixture of fear, and sorrow in you," Olivia pointed out, clearly, in a monotone voice. "Perhaps I can be of help, by tactile stimulation of your----" M's service synthetic-fleshed assistant of so many years of service continued, extending her hand gently towards his quivering wrist.

For reasons M couldn't determine, he pulled it away, contracting his torso into an even tighter cocoon fetal position than was his normal demeanor.

"I said something inappropriate?" Olivia asked, her eyes confused and, somehow, vulnerable. "What do you want or need from me?"

M took stock of the situation and himself, then pulled in a whiff of sea air blowing in from the still more water than plastic ocean. He kindly, placing his now firm hand on her shoulder, and gave her a hug. "Your forgiveness, Olivia," he said to the robot, who reflexly hugged him back with equal strength and in equal position to what he had done. As if it was something her 'program' was now learning. Pushing the 'lesson' further, he pulled Olivia in even closer, feeling the texture of the synthetic covering over her abdomen which, to many humans at this time, felt softer and, if you closed your eyes hard enough, kinder than human skin. Olivia countered with the exact same gesture. M allowed himself to feel himself become the 'common soul' between them.

"Do you feel that?" M asked. "Please tell me honestly."

"I sense something..different," Olivia noted with actively processing ocular portholes. "An electromagnetic field which seems to encompass yours and mine with a tropism that draws them into a common one that is...ill-defined, somehow. But..."

"Pleasurable?" M asked, cautiously.

"Pleasing to my processing circuits. Compatible with self-sustaining expansion of consciousness," Olivia's reply, with a rarely seen satisfied smile.

"Exactly what I said to my wife so many times. Before I became what she wanted and needed, which happened too late," M replied, feeling his lips upturn into a somber yet soul-feeding smile.

"I don't understand," Olivia replied, as M felt the Pacinian corpuscles in his belly feeling undulating vibrations within Olivia's synthetic abdomen. Or maybe something more.

"It's not about understanding, it's about feeling and being," he said.

"Feeling and being what?" Olivia inquired, in subservient mode. "I sense there something you want to tell me?"

There was. So many things M wanted to tell Olivia. A woman who, to save her from lingering in a painful coma indefinitely, transplanted her into a robot body before the technology was ready for it. Rescuing her from a brain was 'locked in', able to feel everything but able to respond to nothing. From being able to tell loved ones with a murmur or even eye blink that 'hey, I'm alive' to informing a well intending nurse that 'hey, my leg is so itchy it's driving me mad, could you please, please just scratch it!'. The most sadistically designed ending to Life, big L, Mother Nature or God had ever

created, or allowed to happen. A woman who M, as new Associate Professor with an abundance of research money that no one was taking account of, had saved from vanishing on the other side of the veil with an illegal, and highly prosecutable, over injection of morphine. Or decades of being 'locked in' which, to her, would feel like centuries in that single occupancy cell in a very private and undeserved circle of Hell on earth. A woman whose mind and brain he had transplanted into a synthetic fleshed machine then called a robot, then several other advanced models after that, but whose soul and vitality somehow didn't survive the transplant procedure. Or maybe some of that soul had made the transition. A transition into synthetic fleshed humans who now, according to what Doc believed and saw so many times, had become the enemy of the people who created them. And who, or rather, which, would become the executioner of the human race if that mechanized 'species' was not inactivated, or exterminated.

M pulled away from Olivia, then turned his back on her. He gently cajoled Angela to relocate to the kitchen, then closed the door behind her, after which M turned around to 'face the music' from Olivia regarding why he shunted off the runaway girl to another room, and so many other things he did in the last 24 hours that were improper, ineffective, or socially embarrassing.

Olivia inquired, in a procedural voice, to know more details about why M was so frustrated. Her tone became affirmative, then superior, then domineering. In a far more vicious nagging, manipulative, 'possessed' and condescending voice than M had heard from anything from Olivia when she was completely human. Or, for that matter, any human wife he had overheard berating her 'I don't want to tangle' husband in the hospital waiting room, emergency ward or thin walled hotel room in the cheaper areas of town on medical conferences that he enjoyed far more than the luxury suites his grant money could pay for so easily. Synthetic, and perhaps in some other ways, 'locked in', modern day Olivia ranted on like a loud banchee, her eyes turning jet black. As if she, being an advanced species relative to humans, even John Newmann, were expected and required to would inherit the earth. While of course pretending to serve those who created them. Much, M considered, like humans, who God created, would be the first and most effective executioners of the Creator above and within each of us.

Finally, Olivia ran out of unanswered insults, then threw her hands up in the air. She grabbed her coat, then stomped her high heeled boots on the more broken than intact 50 year old linoleum floor towards the door of the somehow still standing bungalow.

"Where are you going?" M asked, gently.

"For me to know, and you to find out, if you care enough to find out," robot Olivia's words, delivered without any eye contact, but with ocular portholes that seemed to be feeling something. And projecting something that, in her caring and frustrating moments, she had shown before the transplant procedures. With her hand on the door, she opened it.

“‘Caring’, you said, instead of ‘are mentally disturbed enough to remedy’,” I heard, M said, feeling, somehow, a sense of accomplishment for the soul transplant into robot technology he had pioneered.

“It was for economy of verbage,” Olivia replied, slipping into mechanical mode. But not quite all the way this time. “I’ll be recharging in the hovercraft outside,” she said, her voice sounding exhausted, her circuits no doubt overworked in ways that they were not designed to handle. “Do you have the ignition activating device?” she asked. “I seemed to have lost mine,” she said, searching again into the pockets of her coat, then belt-pack, finding nothing.

“They used to be called keys,” M said, throwing her the ignition devise activator. “But, as you officially still are under my care, and I’m not yet retired from my position, one order, or rather, heartfelt request.”

“What!!!!” Olivia barked back, her eyes somehow registering frustration, fear, exhaustion and...if one was a romantic, that ‘L’ emotion that over the centuries was so often stated but so ineffectively felt, and expressed.

“Be careful,” M said, calmly and compassionately. “We’re more vulnerable than we think we are, from being destroyed by the authorities, and ourselves.”

“Of course,” Olivia’s answer, with her back turned, hiding how much she really understood, and felt, as she went out the door, and slid into the hovercraft, hidden from view from above by a boat tarp.

M lingered in what had been the ‘television’, and before that, the ‘living’ room of the bungalow, allowing his tired and aching ass to fall into a heavily padded and only moderately musty ‘easy’ chair. A sitting platform he would normally pass up for something with a hard surface with a back that would keep his spine erect, and the mind atop of it alert. He allowed himself to feel...comfort. A strange sensation, from which he was aroused from, and punished for, by a call on his phone.

It was from the hospital. The chart from a patient who was being monitored remotely, numbered 2369, aka ‘Svetlana’. The brain revealed a tumor in the left cerebral cortex, deemed inoperable, with severe liver damage, and lungs with profiles that any first year resident would identify as metastatic cancerous. Projected time for ‘natural expiration’, 2 weeks. Further analysis of the data indicated that it was toxin induced, Hydroxy-methyl agent YHU endotoxin, specifically through a needle mark on the arm. Prognosis: ‘beyond grave’ for the now internationally banned agent that destroyed the ability to feel, think, be creative, expressive and, eventually, to give a shit about the aforementioned as well as anyone else. The most deadly Dull Out Virus invented by man, or robot, which rendered even the most intense, humor emitting, creative and intelligent human into a procedural, boring, lifeless and psychologically simplistic being with less emotional appeal and affect than the least human robots manufactured by John Newmann’s company, or any before it.

Doc M vicariously felt special empathy for this now numbered patient, researching the data banks on his portable and hopefully private computer for any clues as to how to cure her. He found nothing that could save this very human soul, who, according to his profile, was ‘a creative scientist and prolific artist who in a past time would be a channel for ‘Enlightenment’ but now, is the severest dangerous patient to herself/herself, and the finally world wide Pax Amerocana.’

Doc M, who not joined the underground, but clandestinely saved many members of it from being sent to the psych ward, considered who it could be. He had been ordered to keep Svetlana ‘alive’, small a, long enough to get information from regarding the Underground. A patient who, after extraction of the appropriate information by John Newmann’s cronies, would no doubt be transplanted into their mind, brain a synthetic-fleshed body before the natural delivery of death with an extra helping of Dull Out Virus to ensure she would stay compliant, and happy. As an observer for Newmann et al once she returned to the secret camps the Underground still somehow operated in the toxic-infested areas which Nature reclaimed after the melt downs of the 2040s.

Doc M had risked everything to get Svetlana out of the ‘psych ward’, with her soul intact. A Soul whose body he fell in love with while she was in captivity, and who periodically visited him afterwards to continue that mutually felt romance of the flesh and mind.

Doc M felt helpless and hopeless, now, fearing this powerful and beloved prisoner for whom he was responsible was now lost, perhaps due to not covering his tracks well enough when Sventlana had visited him, and tried to get him to leave his post to join the Underground permanently instead of remaining in his government position to ‘minimize harm’ and ‘change the system from within’. But there was also guilty going back even further, for M. After all, he had handed over such powerful technology to people who worshipped technology above all else in his more idealist days as a researcher who believed that science, if expanded on its own terms, could save humanity from itself. And cowardly, for not standing up to the authorities who now controlled everything and everyone outside of the pockets of useless and toxically-infested land on the planet where the Underground hide, and, so rumors had it, thrived. And stupid, for not being able to figure out, with his old and aging mind, which was forgetting things routinely now. Such as how to ‘change the system from within’, a process that Olivia, when she was still completely human, said was ‘extremely difficult maybe, possibly, five days a year, and impossible for the 360 others.’

Doc M, and Ira, were awakened from the dark, black and empty pit of despair by a song, coming from the kitchen in the bungalow after modern day Olivia had left to have her circuits ‘recharged’ in the hovercraft. “Yes,” he thought, pondered and hoped as he heard Angela sing an emotionally-inspiring and thought provoking song of her own composition, one he had not heard anyway. One whose incomprehensible lyrics felt like truth, and whose notes carries that message like a dull out destroying blast of fire, and warmth. He rose up from his chair to ask this wonder-child, this hope for a new generation, this finding he had by Divine Providence found on one of those five ‘good’

days a year, if she had any ideas about how to cure Svetlana before she would be lost into the assigned identity of patient 2369.

While walking to the kitchen to consult his new student, and angelic messenger sent by a God who decided to finally get off His or Her lunch break and DO something for the beings He, or She, or It, created 'in His, Her, Its image', M allowed his mind to see Svetlana's face. The author whose books inspired and instructed him more than any others. And whose death he faked before shuttling out of the latest psych ward she had been referred to. So she could be reunited with Ivan, her elusive, and, according to Svetlana, her still beloved yet constantly argumentative biological husband, who had Revolutionary Branch offices in the most inhospitable regions of the world. The husband who Svetlana told the love starved Doc M when she was his patient, and interrogator, she would leave in an instant if M wanted and needed her more.

As an expression of love for Svetlana, who she was and, more importantly, what she did, Doc had pushed her away on that last day they set eyes on each other. Of course he did consider the possibility that robot Olivia knew anything about who Svetlana really was to the Underground, and to him. Yet, synthetically-fleshed Olivia, whose circuitry was dependent on technology invented by John Newmann et al., was not a dumb robot. And somewhere inside of her still lingered elements of the soul who could read M's mind, particularly when he was trying to hide a secret in it.

One thing that M was able to get from Svetlana, and a few other patients who he was unable to save from incarceration into a machine, or death, was the locations for Ivan's base of operations. Some of them anyway. They included pockets of often deep frozen Siberia, steaming hot canyons in Death Valley, the unbuildable-on mountains of Interior British Columbia, the swamps Newfoundland and, of course, pockets of forests in South Jersey which were rendered toxic and uninhabitable by industrial wastes created by technology that elevated every other region of the New York Metro area into a mega-structured paradise where buildings not only scraped the highest clouds in the sky, but were now being build upon them, those not smart enough to adjust to above the cloud living being pissed on, quite literally, by those who had.

M boldly strode towards the kitchen to confer with Angela over a meal of apple stale turnovers, outdated pickles, and more byproduct than meat hot dogs. He allowed his mouth to water, anticipating the ingestion of the first meal with a fellow "Martian". He eagerly awaited what the third brain between him and Angela would come up with regarding patient 2369/Svetlana. But within three steps of reaching the doorknob, he felt a heaviness in his chest.

It was a massive headache in his right cerebral hemisphere. And, in the mirrored reflection of the glass door, saw yellow in the white of his eyes. When reaching for that reflection to assess if the liver-degenerating sign was real or illusion, noted an injection site on his arm. His computer rang an 'urgent' signal. With shaking hands that could barely hold the device, M pressed on 'the button' to answer the call.

“Yes, this is you patient, 2369, and Svetlana,” the answer. “You both have become toxic to us, so it is necessary for you to be intoxicated,” it continued. “Unless you do exactly what we say, and accept the happy and sustainable option. Nothing personal, Ira, just business. But what you get out of it...you can have a wife and a mistress.” It was signed, ‘John N.’

Angela kept singing in the kitchen. M considered his options, knowing that the best and most effective one would start with something he came up with alone. Without worrying, or perhaps involving, Angela, or even Olivia. Clearly there were two choices for the frustrated, happiness denying Doc who had finally awakened his wife’s soul within robot Olivia’s body, and who had rescued a young child from a world that sought to destroy her, perhaps its only real hope. He faced the reflection of himself in the glass covered door, putting aside for the moment he ‘how’s regarding him being intoxicated at the Store Museum where he met Angela, and maybe was followed to the beach house that no one at work was supposed to know about. “So,” he said, silently to his reflection, hoping it would give him an answer. “Live a short, glorious and maybe accomplished life as we are, fighting and defeating the Pax Americono and its Life-sucking bosses, who no doubt will extract revenge on Angela, Olivia, me and you, even if we succeed.....Or consent to me, and maybe even you, being transplanted into a synthetic-fleshed carrier, i.e., robot, though which we will have a long, procedural life of comfortable, compliant, secure and sustainable ‘happy’.”

M then allowed his glance to be drawn to an old, weather-beaten and blood stained calendar hanging asymmetrically from the wall dating back to that year when Ira, by necessity, became Doc M. Saving Olivia’s life but not so much her soul, the date of ‘reunion’ with her in the form of a robot circled in red. Ironically, it was the same date as this day now. Yet another ‘message’ from above, or below, which Doc M interpreted as something the Creator he somehow now needed to believe required him understand. With specific commands to carry out His, Her, and/or Its Wil with instructions that were garbed, yet again. Even more so than the language Angela had written her new book with, and the lyrics of the song she had composed, and now sung, very loud. On maybe one of those five days a year of opportunity where one could change the world. Or perhaps one of the maybe many others where the window of opportunity for mortals to do godlike acts necessary to save Heaven and Earth were indeed, closed.

CHAPTER 9

Svetlana fought hard to stay conscious of the world around her, though everything in it was designed to put her into a deep and no doubt permanent state of ‘stress-less REM sleep’, followed by a long ‘life’ inside of a robot infested with Dull Out disease. From the constant, sedating droning of the heart monitor beeped out at a 72 pleasing-toned beats per second. To the lulling repeating happy refrains of Musak at the same frequency, hummed by a performer with a hushed, maternal voice, intended to woe its listeners into mindless contentment more powerfully than any Siren in Homer’s Odyssey that lulled sailors into blissful slumber so that they would crash their boats into the rocks. To the reading of ‘Caitin’s Salvation’, an all too popular tale about how a homely young girl plagued with both early onset arthritis and an overbearing, workaholic step father, who insisted that she get up out of her bed so she could ‘make something of herself and the world’. A ‘troubled’ girl who was rescued by a synthetically-fleshed older sister who allowed her to share and enter a robotic body which epitomized the height of great health and fantastic looks. To the new visitor who came into Svetlana’s room, a young girl who seemed to be a hologram from the book, offering her an open jar of multicolored, sweet smelling jelly beans for her to partake of.

“Not this time,” the never-to-reach-35-years-old Svetlana said to the smiling blonde, blue-eyed, young maiden from Wonderland, who but for the color of her hair, resembled herself at that age. “Creative madness is best enjoyed and expressed straight, i.e, without any pharmacological help. And the most toxic and dangerous thing for any artist or Revolutionary...” the once intense Slavic born formulator, discoverer and distributor of new ideas and ideals said as she turned her head to the side. “...is to fall in love with the Reactionary Mark she was assigned to interrogate, convert, pervert or at the very least...contain,” Svetlana slurred out of her mouth, clenching her right fist as hard as she could, as she tried to wack her left wrist as penance for not killing John Newmann before he somehow inactivated and devitalized her. But, thankfully, that cyber master of people and robotic manipulation didn’t understand Russian, the tongue Svetlana had used when he asked questions about where her fellow Revolutionary Comrades were while under the spell of his romantic kisses, and no doubt, something on his tongue that he inserted into her mouth in the heat of passion. “But, I must have said something,” Svetlana, now patient 2369, related to the hologrammed girl, whose big, wide open blue eyes became very clear, while the rest of her face turned into an indistinguishable blur. “Otherwise I suppose they would not have found Doc Michalovitch, and put him in the same waiting room to await death from the natural world. Or, ‘eternal happy life’ inside a soul-dead robot. Or conversion into a hologram, which maybe you are, or maybe you aren’t, but...Be you an angel, demon, hologram or figment of my soon to be inactivated literary imagination, could you please to tell me your name?”

“Her name is Angela,” Svetlana heard from a familiar voice which, upon looking up to its source, looked and felt familiar. “And we’re here to take you out of here,” ‘Granny’ Ira said in a hushed, high-pitched voice as ‘she’ forced herself to walk rather than limp towards the bed. M, who was just as ugly as a woman as a man, then released the external restraints on Svetlana with a knife, the force field wall around her with a

homemade Teslian de-magnetizing ray gun removed from the very padded bra around her chest.

Another woman then appeared in front of Svetlana's disbelieving eyes, a motionless spitting image of herself, as the adult she had, for better or worse, become today. The real Svetlana forced herself out of bed, then felt the floor with her shaking and aching feet, and was somehow able to distinguish all of the visible features of the world seeable by the biological eyes. Upon recovering that function, but still in a surreal daze, Svetlana's stare was held captive by a woman standing next to 'alternative' Svetlana. Around the eyes anyway, she resembled pictures of Ira's dead wife. That mystery woman put her hand behind alternative Svetlana's back, and did something that activated alternative Svetlana's legs, which carried her to and then onto the hospital bed, upon which she landed and projected a mindlessly-contented smile. All the while, Granny Ira reconnected the medical devices to the synthetic fleshed alternative Svetlana, then offered the real Svetlana a pick of jelly beans from the candy jar still being held by the young girl. "Good for what ailes us both," M said to her, taking one into his mouth as proof of such. "Temporarily anyway, and if we believe in it," M said through a few coughs and a death rattle in between. "

Within four seconds of chewing part of the jellybean from the young girl's candy jar, Svetlana's senses opened completely, working with rather than against each other to give her a full and complete assessment of the people around her. And realizing that it was not a dream, or a nightmare, but something far...different.

"First question, Granny Ira," Svetlana asked M, in English. "How does it feel to be dead, and transformed into the body of what is still considered the inferior gender?"

"Interesting," replied the Doc who had been her lover between his ears, and, truth be told, under the sheets for a night when the orderlies and cameras weren't looking.

"Second question, who, or what is she?" Svetlana enquired of the 'other woman' who resembled M's ex-wife Olivia, in the eyes and, if you imagined hard enough, the face and voice as well. An apparently synthetic-fleshed citizen who M was looking at with more fondness than he had ever shown to any biological human, perhaps even Svetlana.

"Someone who's discovering who and what she is, just like the rest of us," M replied as Svetlana's field of vision was restricted to the narrow slits made in the featureless mask which that other woman put over her face, swiftly and procedurally.

"And third question," Svetlana, asked the M, in the obscure dialect of Don River Russian that she, her husband Ivan and M's ancestors spoke, her view of what was happening outside of the veil severely compromised, yet with her third eye wide open. "What medical or technological plan do you have in mind to stop John Newmann from implementing his latest technology that can penetrate into even the Underground zones, which I do seem to remember the details about. Some of them anyway."

“Better technology, which Doc M claims he can develop if you take us to Ivan,” Granny Ira’s adult female companion replied, in that same Cossack dialect. “That’s what will make his plan work.” Svetlana heard as she was plunked into a two wheeled gurney.

“And an extra dose of, what did you and Mama Olivia call it Grandpa, ?” the little girl whispered, added, gazing admiringly up to her new teacher, or perhaps student.

“Human determination, cooperation and...luck,” M concluded as he opened the door, leading ‘Nurse’ Olivia, Angela, and a robot-body-covered Svetlana out into the brightly lit hallway which, for the moment, was empty. Then to the exit door which thankfully didn’t send off any alarms, none that Svetlana could hear anyway.

But Svetlana did hear Granny M say one thing to her, in a whispered voice, to her ears only, that was disguised but still Doc M’s as ‘he’ pushed the gurney upon which she was strapped forward. “Those jellybeans last 2 weeks, then it will be our turn to die. Are you okay with that, Svetlana? Instead of eternal life as a physical disease free synthesized fleshed ‘person’, patient 2389?” he inquired, allowing her to choose either option without judgement or condemnation.

“Yes, to a short and glorious life as a hurting human than a long and happen one as a dulled out robot,” Svetlana replied, after actually thinking about the question rather than providing the Revolutionarily correct answer. “Because as I now know, as a dying human that impending death of the body makes for new insights of the Soul and Mind that the world needs to continue. What we say before we die, our last statements, and insights, are essential for humanity to continue. Which is why...” Svetlana continued the rest of the dialog with a whispering voice into M’s ear, as Granny M’s Synthetic-fleshed Nurse, Olivia as he had called her, wanted ‘in’ on the conversation. “The new masters who have made these robots, want to silence us from saying those last words of Wisdom beyond Knowledge that are only possible if we die as real-fleshed humans. Because they don’t want humanity to continue to be...human, and Alive,” she speed related just prior to Olivia was within hearing range.

Doc M agreed with Svetlana with a quick glance of understanding he shared with Svetlana alone. And the blue eyed, blonde, somehow angelic girl who seemed, somehow, to be at the center of the Purpose of whatever was going and, and would happen. But not without getting a dirty look from the rapidly humanizing Olivia which, translated into Ancient 21st century English in which pre-robot Olivia was very fluent, meant, ‘we’ll talk about this later!’

CHAPTER 10

“So, why is this ‘most recommended route’ to the Underground Headquarters so steep, rocky, bug infested, thorny and hard?” Chief Inspector Sean Rolland asked the ‘informed guide’ behind him as the very plain clothes law enforcement officer struggled to place his aching left foot in front of his agonizing right hindlimb on the flagged, narrow ‘walking path’ that had no shortage of hidden barbed wire and ever present sharp botanic spikes emanating from uncuttable overgrown secondary bush around it. “Any idiot can see that the easiest route through this maze that zig zags to our destination is that logging road below us that YOU said we should not take. So we could take this torture trap goat trail no protective armour on our arms, chest, of lower legs,” he continued, tearing off yet another layer of burdock and thorns that had embedded itself into the flesh already made bumpy by large, mutant mosquito bug bites. He then ran his fingers through his recently chopped ‘convict’ hair, which he hoped would grow back fast when activated by the most recently-derived hair growing elixir, reserved for the elite of course once he got back to home base after this mission was over. “Tell me again, why we should not take the logging road into the Underground Camp, which is a relatively straight line route, instead of this marked maze of wooded ‘trails’ that springs back into wild bush as soon we plow through any of it.”

“Because, you fucking idiot, and goddamn waste of oxygen,” John Newmann, now sporting a beard growing on a face which has been sufficiently and, he hoped temporarily altered to make him look like a ‘commoner’, replied with an added dose of Jersey infused into his verbiage. A quality of raw tone and crudeness of expression which matched the location of the sojourn, as he pushed Inspector Rolland forward with an antique electric cattle prod that doubled as a walking stick for himself when the inspector wasn’t looking. “Shit, that damned logging road has fucking cameras on it, and zapping devices that inactivate, and sometimes kill, any fagala fruitcake intruders who want to take the easy way in,” Newman said, the sensory-numbing medication or something else he had wired into his brain making him ignore, and even enjoy, seeing the flesh on his arms being torn apart by the terrain, the sharp rocks sticking up from the ground penetrating his wooden soled shoes. “And besides, like the shithole loser Underground spies you caught trying to sneak into our labs as synthetic-fleshed grad students and the moronic cunt Russian whore who I romanced into submission said, ‘no pain no gain’. That’s something we fucking have to prove to our goddamn fellow ‘rebels’ when we meet them. As them, capiche!”

“And if they smell our fear? In our sweat? Like the olfactory sensors in the interrogation rooms back at the Precinct detected on the last batch of ‘Revolutionary Humanists’?” the very human, and very alive, mostly because he could hide his age from the authorities above him (including Newmann) Pax Americo Security Inspector asked the leader of this ‘expedition to end all expeditions’. “Even I can smell fear on my face. And terror in my urinary and bowel excretions.”

“Which will make us more convincing to the people we WILL meet, capture and bring back to the labs for the final mass ‘soul’ transplantation program that will put an end

these rebellions against progress, forever,” Newmann assured his most trusted, and available, colleague in a Mission whose real objectives were not shared with anyone, particularly said colleague. “This Mission we’re on now, of course, being necessary because YOU allowed the most recent Underground captives to kill themselves before we could dissect them, and develop an antidote to the endorphin that keeps those masochists going.”

“They gave no indication that they were going to kill themselves!” Rolland insisted, turning around to Newmann, leaning into rather than away from him for the first time in years. He was rewarded for his courage, and stopped from following through with it, by Newmann’s electric prod walking stick, held no more than one inch from Rolland’s bloody, bug bitten chest through the holes in his once intact shirt. “Some of them even willed themselves to die!” Rolland yelled at Newmann. “But you! You had Svetlana, their chief scientist and political leader’s girlfriend, in the palm of your hand! You could have used her as a source for isolating the still elusive ‘defiance and vitality’ endorphin. And used that extract from her brain to develop an antidote for it that would inactivate it in anyone. An antidote to irrational defiance and unbridled vitality that could be so easily distributed everywhere in liposomes, spread into the air,” he said motioning to the strange smelling sky above him covered by natural clouds rather than synthetic ones. “Or put into the water,” Rolland continued, dipping his blistered hand into a small stream of aqua which, aside from a bit of non-toxic dirt in it, was clear. “Or dematerialized and sent through the electromagnetic portholes----”

“---As long as those portholes aren’t blocked by whatever is still segregating this ‘haven’ the Underground can still hide in from the civilized world,” Newmann blasted back. “And if you don’t believe me on that, try to use your communication devise again. It still won’t work. And not because you dropped it in the once-toxic and presumably ‘de-contaminated’ water you seem so fascinated with here. No, these anti-technology, anti-robot, very NON-synthetic-fleshed rebels here think they are wiser than us, which gives them enough motivation to make them smarter than us! Even me!” The mastermind of the newest mind-brain, and possibly soul, transplant technology had exhausted himself. He withdrew the electric prod from Rolland’s chest, then placed it on the ground, forgetting to inactivate it. “Shit! Fucking pieces of goddamn----!” Newmann yelled as he felt the jolt of electricity going up his own very conductive arm. Then proceeded to try to break the defiantly intact device, grunting out expletives of very personal frustration that were not in any Ancient language dictionaries or spy manuals that Rolland had ever seen.

That Chief Inspector, who did the dirty work of dealing with the disobedient public on behalf of an always behind the scene ‘liberal’ Newmann, treated himself to a smile of satisfaction while the celebrity-scientist, whose job in the well protected inner sanctums of Newer York City was to think rather than do, experienced real pain, of the body and mind. For the first time, perhaps ever, a fellow human had seen John Newman sweat, struggle and experience a ‘disruption of his innovative cerebral process’. But such satisfactions for Chief Inspector Rolland were short lived.

“We are going to find Ivan, that bitch’s ‘comrade-mate’, Svetlana, and whoever took that fucking, snobby, cunt whore away from me!” Newmann blasted into the evolving no-doubt blood soaked, agony-soaked hologram he was imagining in front of his blank stare. “And if I find out that Robinson fucking Crusoid Doc M, his robot ‘girlfriend Friday’ and that runaway wondergirl with the naturally-highly developed brain who you lost while following them from the “This was a store” Exhibition, who was assigned to be transplanted into one of MY synthetic-fleshed protogeas, are behind this,” Newmann continued, after which he turned to Rolland, his evil possessed stare piercing through all of the Inspector’s armour. “Your voluntary retirement into a synthetic-fleshed carrier will be implemented, so you can have a long, happy life, which I will personally see is spent in MY service. Despite what you think the bosses who you think will stay above me can do about it. Der ye kin, laddie?”

“Aye,” Rolland replied, to ‘do you understand, boy’ delivered in the dialect of his Irish ancestors, as if through the mouth of an English Lord on the Emerald Isle and the American Masters they encountered when landing in Old New York back in the 19th and early twentieth century. A city plagued by violence, un-stoppable manipulation, bigotry, cruelty, disease and starvation, which seemed now like a paradise relative to the Metropolis which Rolland was ‘privileged’ to be ‘protecting and serving’ now. “I understand,” the Chief Inspector muttered from his quivering and chapped lips with a bowed head, feeling like one of those many suspects who he broken, liberated from the burden of the sins of pride, disobedience and vitality.

Rolland turned around to traverse up the path for refugee ‘Underground Humanists’, leading to the location where, according to all available data, its current headquarters and leader were. He self-observed his back hunched forward, then his moving his ass forward and upward by the cattle prod, without it touching his ass this time. Feeling the degradation of being ‘conditioned’ to learned helplessness. That lesson being instilled by a once good friend who has turned mad, then possessed with an unstoppable evil. Perhaps because of his own technology finding its way into his now overtly sadistic soul. Or his sense of reason, logic and procedural ‘righteousness’ turned into a vendetta against Svetlana, a mark who he seduced into loving him, then perhaps fell in love with himself.

CHAPTER 11

Olivia's recollection of the past was either strong, or absent, depending on what the events her circuits were called upon to remember, and who had brought them to consciousness. Particularly when the conversation around the dinner table at Ivan's half wilderness, half underground laboratory nestled in the hills of South Jersey got to people talking about their childhoods. Who they were as children, how and why they became adults, and the turning points in that transition to 'maturity' that moved them forward, backwards or hopelessly off the road that was, according to human biology, anyway, set in stone within the mind of any seven year old, or cemented there by their teacher. Or, as Ivan suggested, "Karma, debts you incurred in past lifetimes that have to be paid back," or, according to his sometimes argumentative and sometimes enthusiastically agreeing wife, Svetlana, "Dharma, the tasks and Callings you started but are destined, and required by a Higher Wisdom to continue, and complete, so you don't have any residual karma, or have to come back to deal with dysfunctional relationships with people you thought, or maybe did, love" in a past incarnation. Then, the conversations over wild onion salad, geriatric five-legged mutant moose meat, and probably not too previously radiation containing berries over the table constructed of old doors nailed onto bendable logs got to the origins of life, and its Purpose.

Olivia had no idea about what her childhood was like. And it was Angela who seemed most curious about her new 'maternal unit's' past, be it as a robot or a real fleshed human. Doc M, who now called himself Ira, and demanded that everyone else call him such, urged Olivia to recall thirty year old memories that seemed both painful, and happy. But happy in the Right way. Unable to divert conversation to culinary matters during the fourth course of grub grass and elderly animal meat of uncertain origin, Olivia's mind was forced by her brain to focus on the foggy images of herself 'before transplantation', or rather 'birth of herself as a synthetic fleshed citizen'. Just as the indistinguishable sounds merged into voices, and the blurred images became focused into movies about her past experience, Svetlana abruptly changed the topic of conversation to issues of Socratic philosophy and Ancient Summarian models of Socialism. The emerging clarity in Olivia's mind vanished back into a black, unrecognizable void. Just when Olivia felt vulnerable, and alone, Svetlana glanced lovingly at Ira, with a deeper affection than the 'Queen' of the Underground seemed to have for Philosopher-King Ivan.

But it was the memory of what happened a few days ago that baffled, and tortured, Olivia most. When Ivan asked how she and her new daughter had met, Olivia drew a blank. Both on the day of the visit to the "Store Museum" exhibition, and the day previous to it. Still, Olivia nodded in agreed with Ira when he, as her 'far more than friend', related the details about the wonderful coincidence it was to be able to liberate such a bright, young and kind mind from the clutches of the Security Police and her previous caretakers. Caretakers who Angela still refused to identify or had enough of a survival mechanism to remember. But whatever Angela's past was, or anyone else's Olivia was more concerned with how to do something effective in the present. So that there would be a future worth living, for the congregation around the dinner table, Ivan's fellow volunteers at the so far

un-raided mobile Humanism SERVING laboratory, and those in the ‘civilized’ world transformed and on the road to being owned by John Newmann et al.

One of those volunteers was amongst the many busily repairing a piece of equipment Olivia didn’t recognize as she turned her eyes and consciousness from the conversations around the dinner table of the ‘elites’ in this newest ‘people’s revolution. Biologically, that volunteer seemed to have been constructed with biological features from every decade of the 21st century. He winked at her with eyes that seemed familiar, a confident lilt in his smile, though both were surrounded by a bearded face. The mop of overgrown hair on his chin, cheeks and upper lip somehow didn’t suit him. It was as if a king was transplanted into a commoner’s body, but his princely charms seemed irresistible. Whatever he was selling, Olivia’s circuits gravitated towards deciding to buy. But the sale was halted by his comrade, who wore a bandana around his face, his hair recently chopped down into one of those ‘doos’ that was now a required part of every interrogation process. Before the individual in question was considered guilty, pulling him back to work with the rest of the non-aesthetically-looking humans, all of whom seemed to have some kind of physical afflictions, including deficits of motion, vision and speech, as well as mutilations of the flesh. Still, between carting around heavy freshly cut down lumber and steel megapanel from point A to B, and sometimes back to A when Ivan changed his mind, this scar-bearing ‘philosopher king’ amongst these noble peasants continued to smile at Olivia in ways she had not been smiled before, at least according to the memory banks in her cerebral circuits.

“He’s flirting with you, you know,” Angela whispered into Olivia’s ear. “Or should,” the very human young girl said to her new synthetic fleshed mother while her new very human step father continued talking medical procedure and military strategy with Ivan in Russian, and emotionally-bonding philosophy with Svetlana. “And it’s a good thing. Flirting with him, that is.”

“And a...needed thing,” Olivia answered, feeling the truth of that statement for reasons that her self-observation verification circuitry could not relate to her conscious cognition processing banks.

With that, Olivia slithered away from the al fresco dining table, walked over to the worker Prince Charming and rolled up her sleeves. That gentleman amongst the liberated and willing laborers threw her a hammer and screw driver, both of which she caught. With a warm, hearty and sincere welcome in his eyes, he motioned with a turn of his head, to the devise they were charged to re-build, according to a picture above the apparently blown up mess that was about to be reconstructed. Olivia apologetically shook her head ‘no’, with bow, pointing to the empty chair at the table where she had been sitting.

She then looked at M, Svetlana and Ivan, who were sharing a desert of discourse, technological discussion and laughter. “Laughter I’m not entitled to be part of,” Olivia found herself noting, and minding, from a silent voice inside her that she didn’t recognize. “Or that laughter is AT me,” she postulated, and quickly confirmed, without

any real data except a 'feeling'. Olivia self observed her fingers grab hold of hammer and screw driver in a tight fist, imagining the first pounding M's wrist, as he lay his hand on Svetlana's shoulder in the midst of a shared belly laugh, and the other tool twisted into whatever orifice Svetlana valued, or enjoyed, most. "What am I feeling?" Olivia asked herself in a silent voice which manifested in ascultations that she could hear.

"The need to be useful to others, and me," she heard from a very real source, most specifically, the gentleman laborer, with a working caste Jersey diction from a past age that she had never heard in person. A gentleman in full possession of youthful arms which were stronger than M's shriveled, wrinkled and age-spotted and now possible cancer-lump covered forelimbs. Whose hands on her anger-infused shoulders were bigger than the old fart who boasted about the virtues of labor but at the hospital and lab, seemed to allow others to do the physical work. And whose smile didn't seem to have any other agenda than valuing who Olivia was, and wanted to be. "Work and play are both more enjoyable in the right company," he promised as he invited her with a courtly bow to join him at his work station on the mega-machine under reconstruction.

"Yes, indeed," Olivia concluded, meant and felt, as she accepted the invitation from the human. One who made her feel more loved, on her own terms anyway, than M seemed to. But still, Olivia needed more data to confirm that this new way of processing data from the outside world, and disruptions in mentation from the inside of her circuitry, was in the service of humanity, and herself. She looked around for Angela, the young girl with, according to M anyway, the Old Soul, for answers, but she was nowhere to be found.

"Something wrong?" The gentleman asked Olivia in a voice she somehow recognized, but in a different diction.

"The girl," Olivia said. "There was a girl with blue eyes, long blonde hair, this mind that---"

"----Made her run away into the woods when I tried to say hello to her, and offer some of my wild root candy," he said, taking out something that looked like large lumps of chocolate coated covered with small nuts of some kind from his pocket. "There seems to be something very right, and wrong about her," he offered by way of constructive postulation. . "But then again, what's right and what's wrong, that's up to us, right?"

"Right," Olivia concluded as she marched to the gentleman laborer's work station, beholding the construction job he and the others were assigned. "What's this devise?" she asked regarding what seemed to be a large chamber with multiple closets in it connected by circuitry that seemed to be from another century, or maybe planet. "What is this supposed to do?" Olivia asked, noting a pile of nails in front of her, picking one up in her hand, the hammer in the other.

"It goes into the wood, or the metal, and ideally not into your thumb, especially fine looking ones like yours," the laborer whose fingers had more blisters than skin on them

said as he placed his large assuring hands over Olivia's slender, unblemished phalanges with her nail hand, then placed his other paw over her hammer hand. "It starts gently, in small steps," he said, as it seemed that they both secured the nail into the hole in the metal sheet and a new, firm slot in the underlying wood with a few gentle strokes of the hammer. "Then once we know where we're at, we proceed more assertively, he continued in the two handed tandem action, putting the nail further into the assigned location. "Then, when we feel that everything's connected, or on its way to being connected, we create union of what was previously apart," he said as his hand, and Olivia's let go of the nail, and, they both pounded the nail into place, uniting wood, metal and nail. Olivia shared the accomplishment of mind and matter with upturned lips and very 'connected' eyes. But before allowing some kind of biological gravity and/or emotional tropism to purse her lips with his, Olivia had to ask one question. "Your name. Your real name. Would you mind telling me that?"

"It's...John," he said, revealing a half of his name, and perhaps life. But it was enough. Particularly when he asked Olivia what her name was.

"Olivia, I think," her reply.

"Olivia what?" he pressed, gently. "Who were you before you were transplanted into this beautiful synthetic fleshed body?"

"I was someone who..." Olivia answered, holding the rest in a reflective pause, turning her head and averting her eyes. After a pensive 6 seconds that felt ten times longer, she continued, directing her head and stare at, and into 'John'. "I was someone who I don't think I want to be now. So I can be..." The rest of Olivia's answer was absorbed into, and transmitted through, a kiss on John's lips, which made her feel the beating of the pump in her chest which she now felt as a heart. Loosening her ability to hold back anything, initiating a program, nay, a Life big L, where she would hold nothing back from John.

CHAPTER 12

“So, what did you get from ‘Comrade Olivia’ after you wooed her into what her designers called ‘love’ with another one of your devises the real bosses don’t know about, or human tricks of charm that you used on Svetlana that I should know about so I can do my job better?” ‘Comrade’ (and still Chief Police Inspector) Sean Rolland asked his fellow undercover underground worker during a lunch break of ‘naturally killed’ elderly venison. It was flavored with mutant plants which provided the gustatory sensation of old fashioned garlic, oregano and honey after a third excessively long shift of converting the 19th century meshed machine into a late 21st century ‘module’ which both the volunteer and conscripted repairers were told was needed for their survival and possibly the world’s. “And tell me, again, what you got from Olivia and Svetlant, except for the opportunity to evacuate your sperm into a receptacle that gave you pleasure without the burden, to you and the world, of having any offspring.”

“I got that... putting salt on that meat, and more chocolate onto that ‘pie’ in front of you is going to just make you hungrier after you eat it,” ‘Comrade John’ (Newmann), the mastermind of the latest Mind-soul transfer technology and controller of every other method to further civilize the planet, in his image of course, replied to his fellow clandestine info gatherer and saboteur. “And that neither Olivia nor Svetlana doesn’t know how to reverse what this ‘machine’ we’ve been slaving at, while Ivan keeps redesigning it with new instructions every day. But that they do know what it is supposed to do.”

“Which is?” Sean pressed.

Newmann, Chief Scientist of Newer York Research Institute and, if he had his way, World Technology stayed silent. He related with his non-responsive eyes the message he so often conveyed to the Noble Thinking Police Chief whose task, pleasure and passion was to enforce the laws he was entrusted to enforce, and rewarded so well for not questioning.

“So, you want something else from me before you answer my question,” Sean surmised, putting down his fork, ignoring, for the moment, the importance of feeding his empty stomach and, rightly or wrongly, maintaining his blood glucose level so he could think clearly. “So, what is it this time that you ‘request’ of me, Comrade John?” Chief Inspector Sean inquired, addressing him by that title as he sensed he was being watched, and listened to by his fellow Underground refugees.

Fainting hunger of the belly, John rubbed his already overfilled stomach, then pointed to Sean’s still mostly uneaten meat, pie and vegetable of some sort plate. With an obligatory smile on his face, accompanied by the sound of yet another hunger pang, and a even larger wave of exhaustion overcoming his already faint head (the body under it unaccustomed to physical work), Chief Inspector Rolland pushed the plate to his official co-conspirator, and increasingly, master. “Each gives according to their ability and eats according to their needs, Comrade,” Sean said, loudly enough for the periodically

watchful Comrade Foreman (and perhaps Underground Security chief) to overhear. Sean faked satiation with a pat on his own underfed belly, which he did his best to artificially inflate with air. Just in time for a passing by foreman laying down the latest instructions for how to demolish what they had done demolition of what they had done in the morning.

“Sorry, Doc M’s suggestions, Angela’s recommendations, and Ivan’s orders,” the old supervisor with thinning white hair, a wrinkled face and arthritic limp, but vibrant young eyes that made even Sean ignore all of the former, related by way of apology and explanation. “For our Common Cause,” he concluded with the kind of naïve fire and idealism that Sean recalled was something that he one had, so many disillusion and moral comprised ago.

After the Foreman strolled to someone else’s lunch table, out of sight and hearing range, John wiped the ‘I guess the boss knows better than I do’ from his loyalty-projecting face. With his right hand, he threw Sean’s portion of food down into his own pie hole, while using his left to get a closer look at his and Sean’s instructions.

“So, the reverse process of transplanting dying souls into synthetically fleshed people IS doable, on a mass and individual level,” John noted with admiration in his eyes, and fear hidden very well behind it.

Sean felt accomplished. He finally got an answer as to why the most important scientist and law enforcement officer in Newer York were sent away on a Mission best done by expendable people. Be they in human bodies or synthetic fleshed vehicles. Until John burst his bubble with, “I was going to tell you, when you were ready.”

“Ready for what?” Sean inquired.

“What’s necessary,” John replied. “When the time comes.”

Sean knew better than to ask specifics, and John, who Sean still wanted to keep as a friend, thought it best not to give them. But, Sean flashed upon an old, yet never outdated realization, and moral dilemma. When you follow the orders, or requests, of a friend who has adopted a different set of value than when you started your friendship, it is often called loyalty. Or is it really madness? Sean would find out soon enough. He would very soon loyally obey his technologically superior old friend. Or would find a way to deceptively go against John’s newest plan, to save the world, and if possible John himself. There was one problem of course. John was naturally a better manipulator and detector of deception than Sean was, despite his job description. But even if such could be changed within Sean (due to his application of biologically human effort with the most marvelous invention possible---the human brain) John’s brain implant technology and neuro-linguistic detection devices seemed to be ahead of the infinite capacity of the human brain to meet the evolutionary demands of its environment. And even the most basic need, that of survival.

CHAPTER 13

“So, are you sure that inverting electric current polarities in our captured transplant chamber will enable us to transplant consciousness trapped in robots to go into 100 % biologically created and containing vehicles?” multi-lingual Ivan asked in Don River Cossack-dialect Russian of the newest imported and recruited expert in transplant technology. The self-proclaimed and circumstance-elected Revolutionary leader looked around the newest location for his private office, a camouflaged fern roofed pit in wooded hills after he told everyone, including Svetlana, that he was going to the lake. “It was your technology that started it all,” he said, turning to his guest, offering him an open ear with his eyes and an ear of freshly cooked ‘more natural than mutant corn’ with the other.

“Sometimes getting out of a swamp, or relationship, the same way you got in, just digs you in deeper. But, in principle it should work, with of few adjustments felt as you go ahead, of course?” Doc M replied limping his way back to the his appointed position around the small pit of smokeless hot coals on the rocky and uneven floor of the ancient Pre-Columbian conference room. He finally found a rock that resembled a chair that with enough moss on it so as to not tear a hole in his ass, as sitting cross legged on the ground was something painful for M as a kid and impossible as an adult, unless of course the idea was to never be able to get up. “And such adjustments should be what?” he continued, in English, turning around to an even smarter, wiser and, because of such, kinder transplant technology expert in the bush-covered dugout, visible only to those who are in it.

“First, designing a machine that forces everyone to tell the truth!” very comfortably cross legged Angela demanded of her elders. Her clothes were tattered, her long hair twisted in assymetrical braids by burdock, her face so intentionally caked with mud that without having biosensors it would have been impossible to find her after she had fled into the woods without explanation. “And a machine that would make you tell me why you didn’t believe me when I said that Comrade John was the devil!”

“Because the devil doesn’t exist,” Ivan asserted, dipping into a pot of stew over the slow burning coals, offering Angela an adult sized portion, which the child still refused to eat.

“Except in our imaginations of course,” Doc M added. “Which are real only if we it be. An imagination which can make, hmm...” He took Angela’s bowl into his quivering and painful hand. “Make one think that this mixture of roots, weeds and presumably decontaminated meat of unidentifiable but non-toxic origin, tastes like Chocolate Chip ice cream.”

M took in a small portion of the concoction made from the abundant underbrush of overgrown plants and chemically-preserved mammalian flesh gathered from the area of South Jersey that had walled off following the various ‘environmental accidents’ of the first half of the 21st century. M was of course fully aware that some of the somehow

preserved meat could have been from the remains of the human immigrants encouraged to resettle the 'safely detoxified zone' during the third quarter of the century. "Hmmm, good", he said with a big smile on his face while forcing his tongue to swallow the gruel. Gruel which, according to Ivan, Svetlana, and everyone who had been eating it, enabled you to 'live long and (between the ears anyway) prosper'. Even if you were intoxicated with specially formulated agents from Newmann's lab that slowly and painfully kill the body as well as spirit like Doc and Svetlana had been while in the civilized world, which were now in wide spread use in smaller doses to the mass population. "Come on, Angela, it's good for you!" M exclaimed to the still disbelieving child, who still had not revealed her true origin or her real name.

"She isn't hungry, Doc Ira," Ivan reminded M. "Youth, though it knows so well what is good for the world, so often doesn't know what is good for itself, you know," he offered to his elderly companion and cohort. "But youth still needs to be protected!" he blasted into Angela as she tried to sneak out the door of the dugout. Ivan pressed a button on an ancient television set remote control, activating the electric field in front of the fleeing young genius, An eight year old girl who, somehow, more about technology than any other adult Ivan, or octogenarian Doc, knew. A young, scientific wiz kid one who talked to so many imaginary friends, and enemies. None of whom anyone else, including the metaphysically oriented Svetlana, could see, or feel.

"What do you want from me?!!!" Angela demanded of the old, frail (and somehow still alive) Doc who had saved her from pursuers in the technologically-civilized world. Then the vicious, when he had to be (yet still kind when he could be), super-able bodied middle aged Russian born Internationalist Social Revolutionary and Underground leader who kept her 'protected' from exercising the freedoms he said he was fighting for. "What do you want from me!" Angela the screamed out to the unseen visitors who had, apparently, snuck into the dugout through the cracks in the fern-metal network 'roof'. They seemed to be pulling her away by her tiny arms into a big hole in the earth, according to her rants. "Don't let them take me! Don't let them take any of us! Please!" Angela pleaded to her two uncles 'real world', captors and Comrades, depending on what the agenda was at the moment.

Doc and Ivan looked at each other, each somehow remembering how important it to 'functionally' believe in the myths they told kids about Santa Clause. And to defend those young souls against 'buggie men' hiding under the bed or emerging into the room when the lights went out. After yet another conversation between the two rebel leaders conveyed more between the eyes than with the mouth, or the pen, they battled the unseen demons, pushed them away, then stomped on them. Then cut them up, threw them into the stew pot, and closed the lid.

"Now, we eat them to get their power," Ivan boldly declared, evoking a thoughtful cocking of the head from the grateful and thankful Angela, who, for whatever reasons, was not being pulled down into the ground by them anymore. "Use devil's fire in the service of Heaven," he said to the angelic young girl. Still, Angela was not convinced,

seeing other demons entering through the slits in roof, for reasons that baffled Uncle Ivan.

“Innoculate ourselves with bad people and bad habits,” Grandpa M said as he crouched down on the dirt and rock floor, placing his assuring right hand on her still shaking left shoulder. “So we can develop cerebral antibodies and become the cure for ignorance and cruelty,” he explained. “Like we so often do with relationships that we know are fucked up from the start, and will only get worse.”

Angela nodded affirmatively with a discovery-infused smile. “Yes,” she voiced with her mouth. She snatched the metal bowl, which in its time (when people were smart enough to own pets rather than be serviced by robots) had been a dog dish. She grabbed hold of a spoon, and requested for Chef Ivan to give her ‘a big inoculation’ of demon containing stew ‘so she could become a bigger and better cure.’

Rejoicing the deepening connection, Ivan complied with the gustatory request from Angela. “One large bowl of Enlightenment providing Chocolate chip ice cream,” he said with a courtly bow, filling the bowl to the self-starved child to the brim. “For the reincarnation of Albert Einstein,”

“Mileva!” Angela blasted out, grabbing the bowl, shoveling it down her gullet with the utmost sense of urgency, and delight. “His first wife, who was smarter and wiser than he was.”

“True enough,” M said with gritted teeth, experiencing pain of unimaginable intensity. “But before we ALL dine on metaphysical inoculations and biological inverters of aging, I need ONE of you to do something important! Now!” he continued with a breath he held in so tightly his face went white. “Someone pull me up from the fucking floor!”

From the corner of his half opened eyes, M felt Ivan lift his torso up off the floor and Angela untwisting his somehow crossed legs, which were both going into paralyzing spasms. After two brave ‘steps’, he felt those appendages again, somehow. They were still connected to his body, and brain. But, they felt weaker somehow. Like they and the rest of the biological material below his neck would decide to opt out of the contract they had with his brain. A brain that knew now more than ever that pulling soul-dead minds from humans who had been transplanted into robots who were now taking the place of humans in the highest of positions, into something biological, was necessary.

The options of course included transplanting a robot trapped soul into a live human for temporary cohabitation. Or into a fetus prior to 5 months of age, the natural time when a reincarnating soul moved into it, according to Enlightened minds anyway who considered such tissue alive only when it had cerebral brain tissue (and not merely a heartbeat). Or transplanting robot trapped human souls/minds into forest animals, who would become the ‘smartest’, or perhaps most masochistic, creatures in their species. Or perhaps, with the right reverse DNA transcriptase technology, transferring those robot trapped souls into already dead human corpses that weren’t doing anything except decaying, feeding

the worms and growing excess hair and fingernails, perhaps with the side effect of resurrecting their flesh. Or, M dreamed, the de-activated bodies of the humans who were the most powerful forces in destroying what was left of humanity. Starting with John Newmann. And his henchman, Sean Rolland. Both of whom, according to official reports, were still comfortably living 'high on the hog' across the river in Newer York City.

As to who would be liberated from the synthetic fleshed carrier that had somehow sterilized or put into a deep slumber their soul, one candidate was on the top of M's list of volunteers for the first clinical trial. Yes, Olivia was ready, M told himself. Made so because of how he tried to bring her human soul 'out', Doc's newest de-robotizing anti-dull out medications, and of course the mother-daughter connection with Angela that perhaps had done more than the two aforementioned clandestine interventions.

And, yes, above all, "Olivia is still loyal to me," M thought as he shared a meal of 'innocuation demons' and roots with his two colleagues. "Olivia has always stayed with me. She has never cheated on me. And never will. And will, after yelling at me for cheating on her with Svetlana, understand that I did everything for her, Olivia. And no one else." This he believed with all of his heart, mind and soul. All of which would depart the body at a time, place and NATURAL setting of HIS choice, or God's. A Spirit the hard evidence requiring scientist now believed in more than ever, by necessity.

CHAPTER 14

“I love you, Olivia,” John Newman whispered to his most recent mark after an hour of midnight romantic foreplay that felt like 10 under the roof of his well camouflaged tent in the woods well outside of Camp. Surprisingly, he actually felt something for the Soul who had been transplanted into the first generation of likeable, fuckable and perhaps lovable synthetic fleshed people.

“I love you, too, Comrade John” Olivia replied, still no doubt oblivious to his surname and real identity. “And trust that...” she stopped, seeming to be confused as to what she meant, felt or needed to not say

“I’ll do the Right thing?” John answered, baffled for the first time as to what the woman under the spell of his natural human charms and in the range of his ever active thought-reading devises would tell him. Both methods of sensing what the other ‘being’ was thinking, be they robots, hybrids or full blooded humans, registered a blank in John’s mind. “Yes, I will do the Right thing by Doc M, Ira or whatever he’s calling himself tonight while he’s secretly making love to Svetlana and publically bonding with her husband,” John said while caressing the ear he continued to whisper his claims, promises and aspirations into, which were more truth than lies. “And I will do the Right thing by these fellow Underground idealists. And I will do the Right thing by the world, caught between idealistic idiots who have become assholes like self-proclaimed Savior through Science Newmann, or Comrade Ivan. And,” he continued, feeling Olivia move away from him in mind, then body, drawing the latter closer to him. “I will do the Right thing by YOU, who are at the top of the ‘take care of’ list.”

Olivia looked at, then into him. She lingered there, allowing, then forcing John to feel seen through. She then perused the details of his temporarily altered ‘commoner’ face and instantly grown beard. Both were slowly degrading due to exposure to cold rains and hot sunlight. “I do know who you are,” Olivia finally said to the celebrity-scientist and rip off artist who, for the first time, felt the emotion of real fear. Even though he had taken a full dose of ‘courage in a bottle’ pills he had made a fortune selling to the Armies of several countries, under different names, that were far more effective than the ketamine White South Africans gave to the Blacks sent to the front lines, and more long lasting as well as addictive Pervitin the Nazi elite in Berlin distributed to conscripted non-Party member German soldiers on the Russian Front. No, something was happening to John, that now terrified him, as Olivia pulled back from him, lit a ‘cigarette’ made from locally grown mutant ‘tobacco’, and after three nods of self assurance, said to him through the puffs that clouded his vision, “Yes, I know who you are.”

“Which is?” John muttered through quivering lips, a dry mouth and a tongue that felt salty, feeling his crotch to assure himself it wasn’t wet with urine.

“Someone who will do Right my daughter, Angela,” Olivia replied after a long, pensive delay. “Who is still scared of you. Can you tell me why?”

“Maybe I remind her of a shithead asshole in her past?” John proposed, feeling it not to be too much of a lie. “Like you remind her of someone she cared about and who cared for her in the past?” he asked, this time feeling like he was on the holding end of the fishing rod and not the one with the hook on it.

“Yeah, maybe. I think so. Hope so anyway,” Olivia replied. She turned her slender, hickie covered neck, and had her stare held captive by the featureless black wall of the green tent. Like a biologically fleshed human trying to dig down deep into the data banks of memory. A memory she had apparently lost during the Mind-Brain transplant process into a synthetic-fleshed robot that had saved her from a coma in a painful human body that would have, at best, allow her to live like a vegetable, that knew it was a higher form of intelligence and Being. She seemed to dive into the deep blue sea, or black abyss, then came up empty. She turned around and look at, but not into, John. “You said you have a plan for me. Something that could serve the Real Cause. The one we both share, and no one else seems to know about, or can handle knowing about.”

Maybe it was a moment of weakness, or maybe one of those Connecting moments where someone finally ‘got you’. One of those, according to the books John had read and was forced by necessity into censoring, moments where you met someone who really understood you. Someone who really saw and believed in who you were and what you were here for. Someone who shared a common Purpose, that went beyond the ‘Causes’ of so many others. A Purpose which John still believed in. A Purpose which could create a world where no one experienced the pain, the degradation of growing old, and the terror of facing death. A world where everyone was happy, living forever, in synthetic fleshed carriers which would, very soon, figure out how to keep supervisors like John in a biological body that would not deteriorate, grow old, or die. A hard earned Utopia where there would be no need for struggle. No necessity for challenge. No pain. A world, nay, universe, where youth lives forever and old age is irrelevant. Where no one would have to sweat, or agonize. A paradise of immortality with joy everlasting. That place the Christians of old, who were obsessed with living their last hours painfully in martyrdom on the cross, the rack or under the skin peeling butcher’s knife, called...Heaven.

Yes, God wasn’t going to deliver such a place to people on earth. So it was, by default and necessity, King John’s responsibility to do so. Which would continue, on an even more advanced level, with Queen Olivia. But only after the ‘reverse’ transplantation process of taking Human souls already in robot bodies and putting them into ‘mortal’ forms, was halted. Or perhaps, inverted.

“And the details of this plan of OURS?” Queen Olivia asked her King, husband and Comrade, seeming to read his mind. One which he felt finally willing and able to completely share with Olivia. To of course the extend she could handle that life altering process.

CHAPTER 15

“The time has come for the final liberation from suffering, old age and even death itself!” M, Ivan and Svetlana saw and heard from John Newmann in a very private viewing of his latest global broadcast in an old lean-to outside of a long ago abandoned mine. It had been converted into a shack with camouflaged from sight with pine branches, and electronic eaves dropping with 70 year old aluminum siding burrowed from the news species of three eyed beavers that had emerged after the toxicity/radiation fallout of 2028, now caked with human, fully domesticated canines that purred and half horn bearing wild horses.

“John Newmann’s on a bigger stage than ever before,” Doc M noted as he forced his throat to take in another gulp of the latest concoction of barely palatable ‘ressurrected wilderness’ tea. He hoped it would have more therapeutic effect on his now failing body condition than the last four batches. The new coughing from even deeper inside his aching chest was due to one of the many ‘flues’ that weakened every part of his body in the past 30 years being around ‘contaminated’ patients. Yet somehow his deteriorating physical condition strengthened his brain, and provided new insights for his soul. “A bigger stage to match John Newmman’s even bigger malicious ego.”

“And artificially big penis,” Svetlana mused, after which she bit into and somehow was able to swallow a large chunk of medically-infused jerky Doc M promised would keep her vision from turning blurry again, prevent another sudden fainting spell and maintain her determination to overcome the numerous side effects of the flesh eating and dull out disease promoting toxin she had been given by John after being captured the night she had lured him into her bedroom. “An artificially big penus that didn’t work any better than his original one, despite his advances in synthetic fleshed technology,” she squeezed out of a mouth that finally stopped bleeding when she tried to put sustenance into it. She then then turned accusingly at her husband Ivan. “And not any better than the men and hybrid robots I was assigned to sleep with, for the Cause!”

“We’ve all made sacrifices and compromises for the Cause, Sventlana,” Ivan said with averting eye, after a long, reflective pause, hiding the details of his pain from M, and Sventlana. “But now, we have a common enemy,” he continued, while getting up from his sharp and splintered ‘thinking log’. A ‘throne’ he periodically claimed would “shoot ‘brains’ up from his ass to his head”, and remind him “how much of a pain in the ass” he really was to himself and others. “An enemy who today is presenting us with the ultimate technology that will engulf our world into his.” he said.

He, M and Svelana viewed on the television screen with horror the rotating ‘flying transmuter’ chamber Newmann was showing off. He boasted with pride its enhanced ability to transport hard working, masochistic, challenge-embracing souls with imperfect aging bodies from anyone walking on the earth, or hiding out in any tunnel within a mile from the surface, into numerous airborne chambers, producing smiling, happy, contented, every youthful synthetic fleshed ‘citizens’ of the new age. ‘Commander’ Newmann demonstrated the point by switching to another mega screen behind him. He wowed the

audience with a real life demonstration in which was able to 'save' twenty Underground Revolutionaries in Siberian on horseback fleeing flown-in wheeled hospital trucks into what said 'delusionary and mentally demented old farts and young fools' thought were hidden canyons, inaccessible by radar rays or wheeled vehicles. The crowd cheered as the riders were whisked off their mounts into the flying conversion chambers as old, tired, painful and plain looking mortals. Then returned back to the saddle as ageless contented, excessively smiling synthetic fleshed citizens, who halted their horses, then waved a group 'thank you' to the camera. The 'saved' riders thanked John Newmann with a song whose lyrics and music reaked of procedure, lifelessness, simplicity and boredom. A song that everyone in the audience John was addressing in the audience joined in on. A song that nearly put Svetlana into a mindless slumber, muttering out the lyrics to the two chord 'melody'---until Ivan slapped her on the mouth, waking her out of the trance. Followed by M kissing her on the mouth, bringing her into the reality of Life and the urgency of the moment. Still, she looked at the screen in shock, her jaw wide open.

"Necessary medicine, the kiss that is," M said to Ivan, Svetlana's still, according to the law of the Land, husband. "Along with some of these, that I spit into her mouth from mine, to be sure she'd swallow them," the good doctor said to the angry revolutionary, reaching into his pocket, retrieving one and a half 'jellybeans'. "The last of my supply, the rest of the dose, that she should have," he said, edging his fingers towards Svetlana's mouth with them. Until Ivan intervened, grabbing hold of the flattened jelly beans from M's hand. He then gently placed them into Svetlana's open mouth, inserting them under her tongue, kissing her on the cheek tenderly afterwards.

Though Svetlana's eyes were still horrified at the demonstration of the device which, by tomorrow, would be inflicted on everyone in the Underground, her lips broke into a grateful smile. It widened and enlarged when Ivan took her hand into his.

"Hypothesis. Deeply felt love or intensely discovered science, which is the best medicine?" Doc asked Ivan in Latin, one of the only languages Svetlana did not understand.

"Maybe Angela knows," Ivan mused in that ancient Roman tongue, allowing himself a well deserved ration of self-generated humor. Then 'delivered from the heart and/or laboratory' temporary relief came upon her. Fear departed from Svetlana's eyes, replaced by intense curiosity. Svetlana stopped being drawn into the technologically designed emotionally-irresistible program on the 70 year old flat screen TV. Instead, she studied it on own terms rather than the presentor's. "Or Angela's imaginary angels know if science is more powerful than medicine, or vice versa."

"Or demons we can convert to angels?" Doc added. "Speaking of which, we have to protect Angela from those demons, or anyone else in Camp she thinks is possessed by them."

“Including Comrade John, who has feelings for your wife?” Ivan pointed out. “Who went missing earlier today, with Olivia.”

“Yes, a completely different John than the clean shaven shit head asshole on the screen.” Doc replied sadly, turning his head away from Ivan, Svetlana and the screen, getting lost in the images he was seeing all too clearly behind his eyes. “That bushy faced, not too bad looking Comrade she apparently has feelings for too. And, as all thinking men who are dedicated to making an impact in the world know, should know, and have to accept...If you love someone, set them free. And if they come back, great. If not, you wish them good luck. You vicariously enjoy the joy, love and just plain fun she’s experiencing in someone else’s arms that you were unable, or unwilling to give her. You become a real man, or no, a real human and...” Doc M heard a strange sound, then looked up. Indeed it was the universal language of reunion.

Though M felt his heart ‘ache’, he did feel his lips smiling as his eyes beheld Ivan and Svetlana in an embrace that seemed to erase and forgive all transgressions they had committed against each other. For the Cause, and, in the case of the officially secret affairs Doc had with Svetlana, him. Yes, M, who had loved two women in different ways, had now lost both of them. As lovers anyway. Or maybe he liberated them from what he often termed his own ‘toxic’ soul, and aging body which had breathed air on earth longer than anyone in the Underground, or in the Civilized zone. It was then, in that moment of ‘liberation’, as some natural loners would call it anyway, that Doc looked at the live presentation on the screen and noted the date of the presumably live transmission, incrypted onto the screen using ancient 20 year old technology that only the 70 year old flat screen TV and make shift transmitter would have picked up.

“This presentation isn’t live!” M exclaimed, shaking Svetlana and Ivan from the Universe they were both sharing during their, second, or maybe third, or maybe tenth ‘this if for keeps this time’ honeymoon. “It isn’t a live John anyway,” he continued, grabbing hold of a magnifying glass which had been used to make campfires in the Underground Camp. “Whoever is giving this talk. Doing this presentation...is a synthetically fleshed citizen. Who looks too much like body perfect John Newmann to actually be him.”

Doc M magnified the picture, showing the symmetry of the skin, cheeks, nose and other features. They all followed the rules of artificially engineered physics rather than the hazard arrangement of flesh which Mother Nature inflicted, or blessed, each of her human and animal children with. M demonstrated his point to a still disbelieving Ivan and doubting Svetlana by covering one side of the continuing ‘Savior Scientists’ face, then the other. “Both sides are the same. No human was ever built like that. Each one of we humans have two faces, two different ‘people’ inside of us who work together, or separately.”

“And the eyes,” Svetlana said, putting aside the magnifying glass. “Yes,” she said. “Those aren’t eyes! They are...electronic ocular portholes. Which means that---”

“---The real John Newmann is not on that stage, giving a new technology to his world that will destroy ours,” Ivan added. “And that he’s---“

“---Somewhere a lot more dangerous than on that stage,” Svetlana concluded. “While his civilization saving, death and suffering ending technology---“

“---Has to be stopped, before we all die the worse kinds of deaths,” M thought, and gave voice to. This time, more determined than ever to do something about than ever. On what he knew would be the last and hopefully most eventful, and effective, day of his life. “But the first thing we have to do, is to free all of the souls trapped in robots. One anyway, as a test. Using science this time, since love has it...limitations.”

CHAPTER 16

There were many dangers to road testing the transfer of a Soul trapped in a devitalizing robot's body, especially if said soul was afflicted with and liked having dull out disease, which made life simple, stress-less, long and mindlessly happy. But even more danger if the soul-transferring-to-robot-carrier rays streaming down from the sky barely an hour after robot-John's global broadcast hit humans instead of animals. Thanks to Comrade Ivan's deflector shields, all of the beams coming down from above the now cloudless sky missed their human mark in the South Jersey Underground haven.

But the immortal robot to mortal human transfer device M, Ivan and, when she wasn't hiding from or being terrified by formless demons, or tricked by angels pretending to be such, Angela had developed was finally slapped together by every worker in camp. Ten volunteered to be co-habitated by souls trapped within synthetic fleshed bodies.

From underneath a shaking but still intact electro-deflector shield above him which was a combination tarps and electromagnetic drawing panels, Ivan sized up the ten volunteers as the rising sun shone directly on their brave, tired, and now distorted faces, which seemed a lot older than the day before. Ivan warned them of the dangers of being the first humans to be a host of a robot captured soul, particularly split personality disorder. And, half jokingly, that if one soul was a masochist and the other was a sadist, destruction of the mind and body would be rapid, and painful. And to the male volunteers, that the first soul he was about to transplant was that of a woman 'with a sorted, convoluted and unknown past' whose identity he was keeping secret.

One of them, Comrade Sean, whose fellow escapee from the civilized zone, Comrade John, had fled in the middle of the night to whereabouts unknown, stepped forward. "Me being cohabitated with whatever robot trapped female soul you have in mind would let me see life from a different perspective, and do something about it," he claimed from the depth of his soul through a shivering mouth like a prophet of Old whose heart believed in the Almighty but whose mind doubted any existence of such an idealistic fantasy. "And besides," he continued after a confident chuckle, the first one ever seen by anyone on his deformed face. "If I'm cohabitated by a woman, maybe when someone tells me to fuck myself or get fucked, I'll have an in house partner to do that with to accommodate their request."

The congregation of refugees and rebels who had refused so much comfort, security and happiness in the civilized zones allowed themselves a big and needed laugh. They ignored, for the moment, the rays from above that rattled the electro-magnetic wall above them, and debris falling from the bottom of the still somehow-active robotizing ray absorbers. Ivan maintained a stoic face. He kept his position upright, like Generals of old who, after pushing one army into the sea, knew better than to indulge in too much revelry as another army could attack from the mountains behind him. Grandpa M/Uncle Ira, in his best 'of course Santa Clause is real' voice held onto Angela's hand, assuring the girl that the demons above and around her would do no harm. And that Mama Olivia

was out gathering berries that would bring good taste to her tongue and good luck for the day. And that she would return with them very soon.

For now, those fairy tales seemed to be believed by Angela, as they were by M's real daughter, self dubbed as 'Promethius', so many decades ago, whose idealistic yet intelligent soul he saw in Angela more than ever. Sensing that Angela had a belly hungry for breakfast, and a troubled mind in need of a song, Svetlana took her aside, offering her the lionesses share of her raison and herb bannock. Along with a century old Russian song that her mother had sung to welcome a new day, which she had sung most sincerely and effectively on her last day on earth.

"So, where is Olivia?" Ivan whispered to M as Comrade Sean made more jokes about the joys, and challenges, of cohabitating his body with another soul. With the kind of charisma that almost, but of course didn't, match that of Robot John Newmann on the broadcast. And the, biologically anyway, human scientist-celebrity John Newmann who dominated the airways for the last 10 years. "Olivia isn't anywhere to be found, and was last seen with 'Comrade John' late last night," Ivan said to M in a whisper he hoped Angela couldn't hear. "The woman who used to be your wife, who is the best candidate to liberate from the synthetic fleshed body that was not only fabricated by John Newmann and his henchmen, can be controlled by him now more than ever."

"She'll be here," M insisted. "Soon."

"And you're sure of this because?" Ivan pressed. "She 'said' so, and she 'loves' you, wants to be reunited with all of her memories of you and herself when she was your wife, and is dedicated to our Cause?" he continued with biting tongue that sent laser rays into M's heart, and soul.

"Yes!" M asserted, staring into Ivan's caring yet accusative eyes.

"She'd better be, or we're all fucked," Ivan noted.

"So are there any WOMEN who want to volunteer for this cohabitation, so we can road test this potentially globally saving machine you all build, with, and for me?" Ivan asked the congregation of refugee rebels that included 27 biologically born females and 6 men who had undertaken a gender transition which was still, after a century of official tolerance, considered a 'perverted deviation' by society, and in many cases, those who chose to transition. "Is there another woman or almost woman here who has room in her body for a roommate, until we can figure out how to clone new biological bodies for these trapped souls on a mass level?"

Svetlana took a giant step forward, but was held back by Ivan's bear-like paw on her tiny, frail chest. "Another volunteer, who is not biologically compromised!" Ivan announced, loudly. He turned to the crowd of eager but terrified workers. "To have a soul that has been trapped into a robot that has forgotten who he/she was and has been devitalized during the transfer, by accident and/or design. To cohabit with you, until we can clone a

suitable biological body to transfer that sleeping soul into. Or, if you wish, to have YOU transferred into, if you want to give up rights to the body you were born with.”

“And this special human soul who is trapped in a robot’s body is where, Comrade Ivan?” a voice from deep into the crowd of Comrade workers asked.

“I want to see the eyes of my new roommate, even if they are artificial, before I share my body with him, or her,” another workers said.

“A body that’s a temple, according to the ancient book we’re not supposed to believe anymore. My temple anyway, which I’m willing to share my ‘homeland’ with,” still another plain-faced worker rang out with a distinctive assurance.

“If someone is going to seek asylum in my house, I want to know who it is, and what prison or dimension they came from,” proclaimed a fourth potential candidate, a five foot 5 transgender woman who climbed atop a log so as to tower three feet above everyone. “Because we all need and deserve to know...who is being re-humanized. Show me the robot.”

Just as in all crowds that become mobs, the simplest of phrases became a battle cry. “Show me the robot!” was came out of every worker in Camp. It evoked thunder in the air, trembling the earth below Svetlana, Ivan, M and Angela’s feet. Until, the sky opened up.

“Who is me,” a faint voice emitted from the hills above, repeatedly, silencing the shocked crowd, relieving Ivan, and surprising M. “I’m the human trapped into a robot. It’s me, the first test subject,” Olivia announced as she ran down the hill. Her usually clean and spotless blouse was torn, her long brown hair more of a mop than a mane displaying goddess like beauty, carting a basket of berries, her hands red with the color of such. “I’m here,” she announced to an assured Angela, and a congratulatory but still jealous Svetlana. Both ran toward her as Olivia’s two legged gallop became more of a forced hobble. “Do what we have to do to and with me, now!” Olivia proclaimed as she got closer, a mixture of guilt, sorrow and desperation in her eyes. After which an earth shattering thunderbolt penetrated the air. She fell to the ground.

Behind her was Comrade John, his artificial beard and having fallen off his face, that mug underneath revealing his real identity as John Newmann. He held a revolver in his left hand, a ray gun in the right. “Anyone comes any closer and they become transplanted into a robot of my choice! With the most unpleasant of experiences that will last forever” he asserted to the crowd regarding the ray gun, after which he shot a hole into two deflector shields with his pistol, hitting the right mark, somehow, inactivating both of them into becoming useless rubble that fell to the ground.

“Stay back, please!” Olivia pleaded. To Ivan, Svetlana, Angela, and finally to M. Then to the crowd, all of whom headed her warning, out of fear, common sense or intelligently directed strategy. All except Comrade Sean, who pulled a smaller version of ray gun out

of his pocket and shot at John, charging up the hill, firing away. Equal fire was thrown back into his direction.

Dust emitted from rocks converted instantly to falling pellets. Then a cloud of hot sand which blinded everyone's view of the duel between the two desperados. The only sound audible was primal screams of righteous rage from Sean, then sadistic laughter from John, then a painful screech of gut wrenching agony from Sean. Which resulted in Sean, somehow pulling the somehow still breathing body of robot Olivia out of the electric force field that now lingered around the unseen gunfight, down the hill towards the clearing where Svetlana had thrown herself over Angela's body to protect her from dying a horrible premature human death, or an even worse 'life' as a robot. And where M was prevented from rescuing Olivia by the firm hand of Ivan, who had belted him into temporary unconsciousness from which the good doctor was now waking up, slowly.

"Comrade Sean!" Ivan said, reaching out his hand to Sean's mutilated left arm, which fell off as he grabbed hold of it, after which he noted his left lower foot dangling from its proximal stump. "You're going to be alright! Doc M here is a miracle worker with flesh, and when he wakes up in a very few minutes----"

"---It will be too late for all of us," Sean muttered through a death rattle that got bloodier by the word. "Unless you save Olivia," he said of the synthetic fleshed body which was now more mangled wire than active circuits. But still, somehow, it was a vehicle through which the barely conscious Olivia was able to breath, blink her eyes and be experiencing the kind of pain that only a sadist like John Newmann could manufacture.

"We'll transplant her right away," Ivan pledged.

"Into me!" M insisted.

"No!" Sean asserted as his last command, and act. "Into this human body," he insisted, handing M a folded piece of paper from his pocket. "Whose identity only you, Ivan and the most trusted people who you know about. It was her last wish, and plan, and..." Sean's words nearly became lost in a cough that emitted more blood and tissue than air. "Where's Angela?"

"I...eh...lost her," a badly wounded Svetlana confessed, and related, pushing herself up onto her knees, holding onto what was at the very least a chest full of broken ribs. "Angela!" Svetlana cried out to the clearing fog, somehow pushing her painful torso onto her shaking and badly bruised feet. "Where are you?" she cried out to the woods, joined by a search party of workers.

"I hope to hell, which no doubt is where I'm going, she's not with him," very ex-Inspector Sean Rolland said to Ivan pointing to the paper in the Revolutionary leader's shaking hand, which held onto the note in a death grip. "If she is with him..."

“You hope my grand-daughter isn’t with who, Comrade Sean?” M interjected while did his best to prevent even more sparking synthetically fleshed circuits from blowing up what was left of Olivia. “With fucking who!” M screamed out, punching Ivan in the chest as the able bodied Revolutionary leader tried to restrain the old doc, knocking the wind out of the tenth generation Cossack. “My granddaughter is with who!?” M yelled into ‘Comrade Sean’, whose face he now recognized as Inspector Rolland. An inspector whose usually accusative index finger pointed to a loose piece of paper in his left trouser pocket.

Ivan grabbed the paper from Roland’s hand. Shock and anger overtook Ivan when he saw a picture of a smiling, and very human, John Newmman on it. Rage overtook

“And Newmann is going to do what with her!?” the always angry at someone, (including himself of course) Doctor whose fist had never hit anyone except himself yelled into Sean’s lifeless corpse as he punched its chest, then mouth, neglecting that there was no soul or Mind left in it to answer. “What is John Newmann going to do to Angela!” M screamed into eyes frozen in place, which seemed to want to say something final, and redeeming. And, according to the theory of the last words or act at the time of dying, something profound and noble.

“This,” Ivan said as he recovered his breath, pointing to Sean’s other hand, which was holding onto three sheets of folded paper he had somehow half retrieved from his right front pocket. M didn’t understand all of the scientific cyber jibberish, and Ivan’s knowledge of such workable but not complete. But both men understood all too well a hand drawn picture of Angela with compliant and happy eyes in a synthetically-fleshed body. As a Marinette worked by a very happy, contented and overly crowned King John Newmann.

“The most intelligent and idealistic human we both know, under the control of the most vicious and power hungry man imaginable. Who can rule and destroy what’s left of the world, through her brain, while her soul goes into a deep slumber that will last...forever” Ivan said, taking the words directly out of M’s speechless mouth. “Who he found out about through---”

“---Us,” M said, thinking about his own mistakes and miscalculations as a good and honest man deluded enough to think he could do Right in a corrupt and bad world.

“Or he found out about through Olivia,” Ivan offered, as gently as he could. “Intentionally or not, as she was---“

“—Trying to get the goods on him?” M sheepishly asked Ivan. “Under your orders?” he pressed.

Ivan was not sure if M was asking out of desperation, or anger. After a pensive pause, during which he averted his eyes, and hid his thoughts as well as fears, he turned to M. The more young than old Revolutionary Cossack placed his assuring large hands on the

old and soon to be dying man's shaking shoulders. "Angela's orders, and mine," Ivan said, keeping his stare even, hoping that M didn't know that such was one of the key ways one can effectively relate a lie to another person. Or convey a hope that, if one believed in it, could become truth one way or the other. "But, we have a lot of work to do in the meantime," he said. "As does she," he continued, looking at the still breathing, somehow, robot which housed what was still, he prayed, Olivia's soul. Which if liberated, and transplanted successfully, could potentially save the world that John was about to irreversibly take over, pervert and destroy. Or, if he was wrong about Olivia's newest alliance and loyalty, deliver the final blow to a humanity which was one technological breakthrough from being self-wiped off the face of the earth forever.

CHAPTER 17

Angela woke up in, ironically, one of her old hiding places in a clearing between two hills that now seemed like insurmountable mountains. To a nightmare far worse than the ones that kept her away at night. In a realm, and state of 'half being', where she could not recall the secrets about her past prior to the ice cream outing at the Store Museum with M and Olivia. Yet, she felt their 'essence' pulling her into a deep dark hole inside her head. One that was still aching which, upon feeling it, had a hard, grape-sized bump on the temple under bruised and bloody skin. One that the reflection in the mirror she was looking at didn't have.

"Who are you?" Angela asked the mirror image of herself on the other side of what was maybe a mirror, or maybe not. An image that didn't speak with her mouth, but smiled, widely and contently. A three dimensional likeness whose waist long, shiny, perfectly combed blonde hair and flowing gracefully down her back, in contrast to the mass of mangled knots in Angela's blood soaked burdock infested 'mane' that no beautician could untangle. A 'mirrored' image whose unblemished, fair skin lacked any semblance of the fresh bruises of black, red and blue that showed on 'real' Angela. And which lacked any trace of the internal bruises on Angela's real bones, and brain, which she had acquired fighting the demons in the deep, dark woods now, and, as she faintly recalled, equally vicious 'healer humans' within well lit 'treatment' rooms in her past. An ideal image whose left eye oozed 'joyful youth' while the other projected 'eternal bliss', unlike real Angela's own bloodshot, old before their time, ocular portholes.

The image on the other side of the mirrored hole in the multicolored fog sung a seductively catchy tune. A bastardized yet contagiously cheerful version the aria in Angela's 'Requiem for the Really Living'. Accompanied by a dance that invited 'damaged' Angela to enter an opened gold trimmed, bright white upright two person occupancy chamber that appeared next to 'angelic' Angela. It was adorned with pillows that reeked 'comfort' as you looked at them, along with Angela's favorite flowers amidst a bed of tastefully wrapped chocolates. But for the luxury items in it, it resembled a converted double sized coffin. Or, as real life and really fast aging Angela now recalled, a deluxe model soul transfer machine not unlike the ones she recalled running away from in the 'treatment rooms' of her earlier, and rapidly vanishing, childhood.

"Who are you?" Angela asked the ideal image of herself on the other side of the mirror, hearing her own voice echoing. She felt the skin on her increasingly painful arms crawl, and upon looking down at them, saw wrinkles appearing on those appendages, accompanied by arthritic bumps like M had in between the joints on her fingers. "Who are you?" Angela asked 'ideal' Angela again, hearing the echo diving into a baritone, old voice which felt like her own. Then it became hers when she raised her arms to pound the headache back into her head, discovering that her hair had turned white, and was thinning. Then Angela felt numbness in her feet, accompanied by the inability to move them backwards, while a force field pulled them forward towards the coffin-chamber. "Who is that?" she demanded of a very human shadow that appeared in front of her feet as she grabbed hold of something in the fog around her that seemed to be branches so s to

not be pulled forward through the mirror. Whatever they were, they broke, landing Angela into a fall that would throw her into the other side of the mirror, yet thankfully not into the 'comfy chamber'.

The shadow, which turned into a bright light, turned around, edged its way to the side of Angela, pulling her up from the rock hard ground that she could feel but not clearly see. The projector of the shadow was a handsome half Caucasian man with slicked back black hair, with a magnificent golden aura around his head. His eyes seemed kind, all knowing, and caring. Though he had heavy shoes on, he made no sound when walking on the hard ground, but rather seemed to float atop a thin stream of heavenly air that emitted fresh light wherever he stepped. "She, that angel on the other side of the veil, is you, Angela," the light encircled messenger said to Angela as he placed his left hand on her shaking right shoulder, converting that arm back to its natural age and healthy state. "You, who, I promise, will experience no pain, no aging, no agony, no sorrow, no fear and no regret in a life where you can acquire more knowledge than you ever thought existed," the healer said with an assuring smile. "Very soon," he promised, moving the other hand towards the bump under the skin on her temple.

"But," the 8 year old Angela self observed herself saying, from an old, dying and painful part of herself, pulling away from the Heavenly-sent angel. "What about wisdom, which is more profound than knowledge? And...without pain, there is no gain," she recalled from somewhere deep inside of her defiant soul, as the remainder of her body aged a year for every second she was diving deep into her Core, markedly contrasting the healed arm the Healer had converted back to health, youth and vitality. "And without embracing challenge and overcoming fear, there is no accomplishments," Angela felt coming up from a very ancient place inside of her that was both familiar and foreign, voiced though a persona that was somehow 8 and 80, at the same time. "And without---

---And without letting me help you, you're going straight to hell instead of the other place that I have authority from those above me to send you to!" the Angel interjected. "Like those others in the Camp that I rescued you from," he continued with an excessively paternalistic tone only possible from a loving male father, or an angel who decided to retain a penis after acquiring his wings. "Look at them, Angela, my dear, dear sweet, and still savable child!" he said with tears running down his cheek, turning her head towards the valley below. He 'blew' a hole through the fog around Angela, affording her a view of Underground Workers and Comrades being fired upon by laser beams from above. Some of them losing their legs as they tried to fight back against an infantry of healthy doctor-soldiers covered in light, moving in on them, slowly and deliberately, deflecting and avoiding bullets and ray guns from inflicting even a scratch. Some of the defenders forfeited their arms while firing back, some their legs, some their nerve as they retreated into the woods. Many of the wounded Underground defenders were unable to move, or be moved, shot themselves in the head to avoid capture, and subsequent transplantation into obedient, dulled out, synthetic fleshed bodies. Particularly when the doctor-soldiers in the invading army tried to inject 'life saving' elixirs into them. Angela didn't recognize any of the doomed heroes, and heroines from her vantage point through the gunsmoke. But then again, she was unable to recognize anyone except herself in her

current state. Feeling the urgent need to run down to help them, real life discovered that there were ropes that were electronic as well twine around her wrist and ankles, tightened ever so slowly by the smiling 'angelic' Angela, who disappeared as suddenly as she materialized out of thin air. "For your own safety, and protection," the Head Angel said to Angela in an assuring, and kind, voice as he appeared in front of her.

This time, his face looked familiar. But not enough for Angela to recall who he was. But she did recall one thing from her past, from an old man with a cranky attitude, a loving soul, and an always overworked mind and body. "Heaven watches, earth works," Angela asserted to the angel as a proud, defiant and hurting Promethian moral. Turning around in a body that was barely a minute away from aging past the point of being mobile, her bloodshot eyes beheld a half-man, half-ape figure advancing through the fog below her.

"And he who has the Heavenly Power and the money makes the rules," the Head Angel informed Angela, without a trace of condescension or anger. "And one of the rules says that YOU are entitled to an eternal, happy and painless life, which is most easily experienced, for you and everyone else, if you do it voluntarily," he continued, after which her slashed the restrains around Angela's wrists and angles with a flick of his finger. Then nodded his head, which opened the door to the chamber even wider, revealing a more spacious 'coffin' big enough to live in behind the now wide open door, with even more chocolate, more flowers and more pillows inside of it, and a small table in front of the 'chair' on which there was a big a dish of chocolate chip ice cream with sprinkles. "Come, be part of YOUR civilized future!" the invitation from the light-enwrapped Angel. "Or you can die like a mortal," the alternative option, made more real by Angela watching and feeling her body go from being 80 to 800 for an agonizing 4 seconds, till the Healer Angel snapped his fingers, bringing her back to a sprightly 70 year old, with legs were able to take two exploratory steps towards the chamber, which returned her to being merely 60. As Angela was thinking about how to get away again, a headache of paralyzing proportion entered her cranium. "Headaches and heartaches go away with one step into the starship to Heaven," the Guardian informed her regarding the still open chamber. "But it leaves NOW!".

"Don't listen to him!" another familiar sounding but not identified voice sent out into the fog from the ape-like hunchback 'monster' approaching. "That dying you think you are doing, it's a perception. A trick. It's all in your head, literally. That gateway to eternal life is an entrance to the worst kind of hell imaginable. Free yourself, and you will see reality," it continued, revealing itself to be a hunch backed man with thinning white hair, and a face she thought she recognized as M, or perhaps needed to. He sang in a strange tongue that Angela somehow understood. To the tune of the "Liberation Concerto for Kazoo and Piano", which she had composed the night Doc M and Olivia had smuggled her into the beach house after the 'chance' meeting of them at the Store Museum exhibit.

The familiar white-haired old ape-man with a surprisingly high pitched and not so off key musical voice, whose gait seemed more mobile than his age and more graceful than his gender 'danced' ten steps forward who seemed. He avoided the deadly rock-destroying projectiles from the Protector Angel's cross bearing, light emitting spear by abruptly

turning his arthritic hobble into a one and a half legged dance. That dance involved a particular movement of the left hand which whipped across 'his' temples, scratching a hole into it deeper and deeper with each beat, each time Angela looked at him.

"Stop right where you are, you old, demonic pervert!" Angela could hear the Guardian Angel scream at the dancer. The frustrated Heavenly Protector continued to fire rounds of deadly divine light at the hunchbacked dancer but they all missed. Accompanied by even more desperate screams from the Guardian calling for the 'devil bitch' and 'demented dinosaur' to 'be gone, back to buried centuries and ages past'.

By the fifth 'be gone to the primordial ooze, devil bitch', the Guardian had changed positions so as to have his beams of light keep the demons from the Underworld at bay. Such allowed the dancer to throw a knife Angela's way, which she caught, and, according to movement of the dance, which she was now able to imitate, and compliment the steps of that dance involved taking slices of skin from the left side of her head. Two slices on the temple later, Angela felt her headache going away, an implant falling to the ground as the Guardian Angel continued battle with the visiting dancer.

Angela's perception of her aging 60 years in as many seconds disappeared. She felt her own biological real world body. It was bruised and battered, but still vibrant and, perhaps because of the pain she felt inside, more beautiful and youthful than ever. In ways that the perfect ageless image on the other side of the veil, which she now confirmed with her eyes and hands as being a force field and not a mirror, could not match. But the chamber the advanced model synthetic was still open. "Angel" Angela pulled real Angela down to the ground, then pushing her towards the chamber. With all the strength real Angela could muster from her human natural fleshed muscle, she freed herself from robot Angela, disabling it with a kick in the chest and a punch in the mouth. Avoiding getting inside the heavenly chamber that now smelled like the worse kind of death imaginable to anyone who valued or emitted Life big L. Yes, Angela now confirmed that it was a chamber that she had escaped from prior to meeting Grandpa Ira and Mama Olivia, by 'accident'. Then Angela remembered the face of the 'kind doctor' when she was 'in treatment' who she had kicked in the nuts, and bit on the arm, while escaping that facility. Indeed it was the same as the Guardian Angel. None other than John Newmann himself, this time in the very real flesh.

"You're not getting away this time!" Guardian Angel Newmann grunted at the dancer, who clearly was M, restored to vitality by a magic elixir derived from his laboratory on earth or Divine Intervention from above, or an all too rare combination of them both. The fog then cleared, affording Angela a view of the valley below.

This time, a completely version of the battle between synthetic fleshed citizens and biological humans came into Angela's eyes. Ivan and Svetlana led the assault, on horses at a full gallop, wielding swords and shouting wild Cossack battle cries that dated as far back as the Golden Days of Taras Bulba, the still not over Pugachev Revolt of 1774 and the cavalry charges against mud-stuck German tanks after the battle of Stalingrad in 1943. Such scared the shit, literally, out of the synthetically fleshed invaders, whose

dulled out and hypnotized souls had apparently never seen such acts of faith, defiance and commitment. More than a few dropped their weapons, fleeing towards the woods above them, and the shelter of the hover crafts which still lingered on the ground. Following the riders, picking up the ray guns and using them against the still standing robots were other Comrades of the Underground, charging full speed on motorcycles, quads, or their own two legs. Several battle cries later, the entire robot army was in retreat, settling in to the shelter of the hovercraft. Their delivery and extraction hovercrafts tried to take off, but couldn't. Thanks to Angela grabbing hold of a spare ray gun that lay next to the coffin-transplantation chamber, and firing it into the main control vessel's engine.

A stand off ensued, neither side advancing, nor retreating. Then, silence from the robots, initiated by 'Angel' John Newmann raising his hand. He then pressed another button on his phone, inflicting a force field around Angela before she could use the ray gun on him. Then, as the force field got stronger, it got painful, causing Angela to scream.

The old man, who Angela now clearly recognized as Doctor M with ALL of her senses, called a halt to the Underground troops advances below with a raising of his hand and a yell of 'Fucking hold your ground, Goddamn it' over his phone.

Angela's invisible fence because painless, for the moment anyway. But it still held. She fell to the ground, exhausted. Still, she struggled to get out, a noble effort which only making the field stronger and herself weaker. Another fog overtook the valley, this time delivered by Mother Nature. It prevented anyone from either side of the battle line from seeing each other, or the two 'duelists' above them.

"You know that you can't win, 'General Ira', even when this temporary fog goes away, which it will," John informed M. "And do you know why?"

"Because you think that Angela is too weak to get out of that force field?" M mused with a self confident grin on his wrinkle covered face. "Human tenacity against modern technology, it will always win. And with Angela's intellect, she'll be able to figure out how to get out of there, and put you in a portable jail cell with no rights to use the computer gaming room soon enough. And with our tenacity, we lesser intelligent mortals down below will---"

"-Figure out a way to transplant Olivia's soul into the body of her choice, one that is freshly cloned and completely biological, and her own, Doctor M? Olivia is gone. Her Soul is now dead, as is the synthetic fleshed marvel carrier that, yes, both of us gave her, so she can go on living. And it was YOU who were responsible for that soul and body and mind, dying, forever," John interjected with a smart assed grin that quenched the light of hope in M's eyes, causing the old man to look downward, so as to see the movie in his mind showing all of his failures, past and present. "My transplant procedures, particularly on this machine," he said, proudly opening his palm towards the very real world upright coffin-like, flower and chocolate containing transplantation chamber which Angela was one kick of John's bootheel from being thrust into. "It will trap a human soul

indefinitely. An irreversible process which not now and not in a hundred years you will be able to undo. Once Angela goes into here, she's not coming out. And once you, and everyone else down below, and all the masochistic morons in other Underground Camps are caught, and prevented from dying naturally, or killing yourselves, it will be my pleasure, honor and sacred duty to turn you into happy, comfortable citizens who will never experience suffering, pain, agony, or---

“---Life big L?” M interjected, through a cough that was more blood than air. “We still prefer and will fight for a short and glorious life rather than a long, eternal, unaccomplished ‘happy’ one.”

“And ‘we’ is?” John shot back with a condescending eyeroll.

“Me,” John, and Angela, heard, from the voice of Olivia, out of M's mouth. “Who, well, knows all of your secrets about this final solution machine that you built to convert all humans who don't please you into robots under your control,” Olivia said through M's voicebox. She began to traverse a circle around John that alternated between M's professorial, hunchbacked, Socratic stride, and the dancelike lilt that she had before the accident that rendered her legs and human body inactive. “A composite me,” M/Olivia continued with a shared heart, voice, mind and, as Angela felt it, soul. “Who knows about who your real bosses are, JohnBOY. And where they are located, and how to convince them that your ideas are their own,” the dual occupancy soul and now united team of Olivia and M continued, in the latter's voice. “And who knows that I got those secrets from YOU, and not Rolland, when we.....,” Olivia related, through M's body, as herself, with the most alluring female gesture of voice, motion and tone imaginable.

Angela listened with delight and fascination, as she was privy to what actually happens under the sheets between a biological male and female human. The intimate things which never made it to the biology books, as Olivia described in minute detail, John Newmann's erotic zones. How he moaned when those never revealed areas were ‘worked’ just the right way. How he could be cajoled into telling any woman anything in advances stages of interplay. And how the LGBT attacking man's man wanted to be and idealized himself as ‘the woman’ once it came to the moment of exchanging bodily fluids.

“So, what are we going to do with you?” Olivia said as she, through M's body, activated those special spots on Newmann's torso and areas that Angela has not seen except in books. Newmann's trembling of apprehension turned to shakes of terror. Then into moans of unavoidable and inescapable ecstasy. Appended by a kiss on the lips during which Olivia (while burrowing M's male face) deposited a special pill into Newmann, rendering him semi-conscious.

Grandpa Ira, as himself, taking over the reins from Olivia, grabbed hold of the device controlling the electric field. “Okay, Olivia,” he said, in his own voice. “Tell me again what button to push so I don't blow up the world, instead of liberating Angela. Like the time when I thought I was changing the volume on our tv and I fucked up the cable and

you---“ A second later, apparently after being informed by Olivia, Doc M’s fumbling fingers stumbled upon the right button. Such liberated Angela from her electronic chains.

“So now what, Mama Olivia, Grandpa Ira,” Angela asked, feeling real pain in the hands she had tried to break out of the force field with using brute force, which, she felt, she could have accomplished if it came to it. “You know that you both can’t stay in the same body forever. Because...” Her eyes turned glassy, followed by a flood of tears flowing down her face.

“My body is dying, I know,” Ira said, caressing her as a loving father, mother and friend. “And I ran out of trick to keep it alive until we can figure out how to clone new human bodies to transplant robot trapped souls into without any complications. But, you’ll be able to figure that out soon.”

“Before YOU die! If I have anything to say about it!” Angela blasted out through gritted teeth, determined to not let the fates have the upper hand, yet again.

“Some things, we have to accept, and some things we have to fight against,” Grandpa Ira assured her. “And beyond human death, has to be a dimension more efficient and kind than this experience. Or, at the very least, another opportunity to fix what we fucked up in this lifetime, and finish what we started, or should have started in this one. With new equipment and insight which, hey, maybe you can make more available to all of us with that brilliant mind and expansive soul of yours. If you hold onto your Inner Core, keep a universal perspective, follow the Path upward and forward, and become a verb...A verb that is, in one of those languages which you understand and I just picked up at this last act of my opera, in this body anyway..... ”

There was something profound about Ira’s words, and promises. Such felt like wisdom when Ira, M or whoever he really was at the Core whispered the formula for vitality and life to Angela, then, after nearly fainting to the ground, asked for a pen and paper to write out more details about such to be retrieved from his pockets. “Yes,” Angela said to herself as she noted Life coming into M’s hands, torso and eyes, as he pushed out the libretto for his final, and most magnificent opera. “A scientific and philosophical masterpiece,” she noted of the notes which laid down the blueprint for transplanting robot trapped souls into new bodies, and a lot more with regard to what they could do after that liberation. But there was the matter of the world as it is now, brought to consciousness as John Newmann began waking up from his stupor. He then worked his way to robot Angela, pressing a button that awakened her to functional consciousness. “Sic em!” he commanded robot Angela. The synthetically fleshed not yet soul inhabited Angela-likeness machine rose up on its feet, leaped upon Ira, then punched him in the chest, breaking most of his ribs. With hands that extended to paws, robot Angela quickly torn into his chest, about to rip open his heart. When the real Angela, who has always fled from demons and demonic people rather than attacking them, grabbed robot Angela by her long blonde main, then pulled her off Ira. By the third thump on the ground, robot Angela was pulverized her into a mass of distorted synthetic flesh which converted the

image of girl beauty into a bald, fat, gimpy wade of 'ugly' with a face and torso that would made any human, or robot, avert their eyes.

Miraculously Ira/M was still alive. He felt a second wind coming into his very overused, and biological old body. Until John, who had always had Chief Inspector Sean Rolland or his robot goods do his 'getting my hands dirty or blood' work, hobbled over to him, pulling up the old man by the collar, his right hand in a clenched fist made into a lethal weapon by electrifying brass knuckles. "This fist into both of your fucking faces. Say goodbye forever, Ira, Olivia or whoever you used to be and will be no more!" John blasted out through gritted and, for the first time ever, a mouth with missing teeth.

The delivery of the final blow from John into M' body was halted by Angela's arm. Then her foot into his overvalued family jewels, which rendered John into severe pain. Such was accentuated by putting the force field around him.

"So, what do we do to him, General Ira?" Angela asked M.

The old man answered, as Olivia. "Put me inside of him," 'she' said. "Which was plan B, my plan B, which is now plan A. Before Ira's body dies."

"Bbbbutttt how?" Angela asked, and pleaded.

"We'll both give you instructions," Olivia said through M's mouth. "Just put me into the right side of the chamber, and Johnboy here in the left." With that, 'Ira' reached into his pocket, handing her a detailed list of the required procedures.

"Why?" Angela asked as she helped Ira and/or Olivia hobble into the soul transplanting chamber.

"Because right now, the world listens to John, and not me," the body answered, as Ira. "And I can defuse everything John has done. Liberate all the robot trapped souls who want to be liberated. And see that the non-liberated souls in robots, and the greedy shit head ones still in human bodies, trap people into the kind of dulled out, 'happy', non challenging eternal 'lives' they don't want, or deserve."

Angela saw the logic of such very, very clearly. She laid Ira's dying body into the 'sending' portion of the chamber. Then the 8 year old girl who was growing up faster than even she imagined possible deactivated the electric field around John. With her small, thin, arms, she dragged John's body to the receiving end of the soul transplanting chamber. "Yeah, that would make sense," Angela offered. "But to be sure that John learns something, and doesn't fuck up the works, she said, looking at robot Angela, the synthetically-fleshed mess she had become anyway.

"Robot Angela. She, it's---fat ugly, deformed and half bald," Ira offered as Angela turned on the machinery, knowing somehow just what buttons to push, and when.

“But she’s a girl. A female robot girl, in which Casanova John Newmann can find out what it’s like to be an on-the-run, ugly, undesired female, for as long as you, or we, figure it takes for him to learn something about life,” Angela proposed. She then pulled the uglified robot version of herself into a third compartment in the multi-pod transplant chamber. “And, maybe after Johnboy, or rather John-GIRL learns how to use science in the service of humanity, and not use humanity in the service of science, we can make him human again? Find a biological body for him to spend the rest of his life in that’s...not so repulsive as uglified Angela, who doesn’t even look close to what I look like now...maybe..”

Angela could see behind the eyes of dying body that the world identified as Doc M, Olivia and Ira, that reunited husband and wife were talking amongst themselves. Then arguing. Then, after firmly holding to their own view while listening to the other, reaching a unanimous ‘yes’ to the proposal. Perhaps for different reasons, but in the same Cause.

With that, Angela sent Olivia’s soul into John’s body, and John’s soul into ‘robot fatty Angela’s’. After the deed was done, there remained the matter of what to do with the lifeless corpse that had been so over-used, and abused by M while he was Alive, big and small a. She could feel M’s soul leaving the now lifeless corpse, heading toward somewhere else. It spoke a final ‘thank you’, ‘farewell’ and ‘don’t fuck up, drop or give away the torch I entrusted to you’ to her in a gust of wind blowing through the trees, moving the fog to another area of the mountain. “I’ll be okay, as will all of you,” he seemed to say. Proof or such, or correlation anyway, was provided by Olivia, as ‘John’, signaling his robot and robot-trapped-soul troops to head home. Then giving an authoritative ‘wink’ to Angela, then a nod of Comradeship to Ivan and Svetlana and down below once ‘John’s’ troops had turned away. With that Olivia walked John’s body away from the plateau. Leaving Angela alone with a dead corpse to deal with, a group of Underground Revolutionary heroes to advise, and a life ahead of her which seemed both open, challenging, inviting and...scary. But...in a good way.

EPILOG

Years later, Angela grew into an attractive woman, in a very humanized world, working with the Underground and the Civilized Sector. Olivia worked through and with John Newmann's body till it died unexpectedly in another car accident, after which she departed the world of the living. In her Will, as advising chief scientist, Olivia authorized the transfer of John Newmann's soul into a more appropriate vehicle. Newmann refused the generous offer, electing to die as 'ugly Angela', whose memoirs, written on 'her' deathbed, were voted published as a best seller for its humanistic insights into the human, that should stay human, condition..

A decade later, biologically fleshed Angela finally found a man whose ability to love was actually more than any biological woman she had ever met, or known. Twins were born, who she raised on stories about Doc M and Mama Olivia. The two precocious, brilliant and cooperative toddlers seemed to know more about the legends they were told about than Angela did. Angela looked forward to the day when she would tell them why, when they were old enough, and wise enough of course.