

1

Kate wanted to kill herself legally and Andy was helpless to stop her. He skidded to a stop fifty feet from the shopping plaza's termination clinic and scrambled from his little green Saab. She had threatened to end her life so many times because of the debilitating pain, but he always talked her out of it. He slipped across the gritty, salted sidewalk and shoved the glass door against the lobby wall.

The receptionist behind the counter lifted her head, but kept her eyes on the colorful monitor graphics. "Yeah..."

"Where is she? Where's my sister?"

She squinted and finally looked up. "Who the hell are you?"

Andy locked both hands around the counter edge and spoke slowly, but his emotions threatened to overtake him. She clicked the mouse and another Supernet site appeared. He yelled over the accompanying music. "My name is Andy Reese. My sister Kate left a note saying she was on her way over to this... this *clinic!*"

A man with greasy blonde hair, clad in a green lab coat quickly shut a metal door behind the receptionist. "This is a legal termination clinic."

"My sister, where is she?"

"Some woman named Karen Reese," said the receptionist, checking something else on screen.

"Kate. Her name is Kate," said Andy."

The guy folded his arms. “ All patients records are strictly confidential according to universal coverage.”

Andy dove across the counter and slid into the office. The man jumped back, but Andy clawed his lab coat. Only his martial arts discipline prevented him from destroying this drone. “ Listen, you get me to my sister... Her disease is not life threatening.”

“ According to the law any client may enter a termination facility and be treated.”

“ *Treated?*” asked Andy.

“ I hope they send you away for this invasion of our privacy!” barked the receptionist.

“ Shut up! Where is she?”

“ Morally, I don't have to answer your questions.”

“ Morally? What do you know about morals?” He slowly crunched the man's skull against the metal door. “ I want my sister out of here!”

“ You'll pay for this, you bastard! There are laws protecting termination clinic employees as well as clients.”

Andy tightened his grip around the man's chin and pressured his head back. “ You let me inside or I'll kill you!”

The man's faced flushed red as he choked. “ You're too late.”

Andy released his hand and stepped back. Tears rose in his eyes as he collapsed into one of the vinyl chairs. The woman clicked the mouse and his hollow voice cut the silence. “ And that's it? You... you just let somebody walk in here and take their life?”

“ I’m e-mailing the Lawyers Union,” said the man, rubbing his chaffed throat as he pointed. “ You’ve broken the law, you prick. We have our rights.”

Andy lowered his head into his hands. He visualized a sun drenched image of Kate’s straight brown hair and medicated green eyes as she lounged on her wicker chair yesterday afternoon. Talk of checking into a termination clinic ceased days ago. After shopping this afternoon, he had planned to bring a specially prepared meal to her, but he received a call from the observatory. While he did not have to drive up the mountain, they needed him to investigate some high energy readings beyond Antares, in Scorpius from his apartment computer. Now Kate was dead because he had stayed home. “ I loved my sister. Don’t you people understand that?”

The guy shook his head. “ You are in big trouble, dude.” He opened the metal door and disappeared into a green tiled room out back.

Numbness settled over Andy’s shoulders. The woman behind the desk continued with her Supernet activities as if he was no more than an annoying fly buzzing around the office. A bony framed woman within shriveled countenance and expression of perpetual annoyance now entered the office from a side door. “ Mr. Reese, we will have to ask you to leave the premises. You are committing a federal crime by remaining here.”

His anger stirred with sadness as he pictured Kate’s verdant eyes again. Before her bone marrow problems she was so energetic and a catalyst in his own life. All his emotions twisted like muddied water down the drain. He banged his elbow against the metal door hard enough to dent it. The two woman behind the counter stepped back and the receptionist turned from the

web site. He produced a muffled wail as he lifted the counter door. “ You damned people. You murdered my sister! You murdered her!”

The front door rattled and cold air swept inside. A security team of two men and a woman, dressed in brown and green combat uniforms, bolted through the open doorway. They surrounded him with long barreled weapons and the short blonde woman with cold steely blue eyes faced him. “

Disruption of a termination clinic operation is a federal offense, Mr. Reese.”

“ How do you know who I am?”

“ You’ve been scanned,” she answered quickly and unemotionally.

“ Are you kidding me?” Andy stared at the heavy rifles as clinic workers gathered behind the counter like spectators at a sporting event.

“ What the hell is left? The Supreme Court makes it legal to kill yourself with no questions asked? If you want to do it, you do it.”

“ Let me talk to him, Sergeant,” said the nurse in the green fatigues. She told Andy she was in the room when they injected Katie.

“ Sure, you get paid for this. You work in a damned termination clinic and you take a paycheck for helping people kill themselves! That’s sick! You hear me, sick!”

She looked concerned, but Andy would not trust someone who just assisted in killing Kate. “ I can get you some sounder. It will make you feel better for a long time, Mr. Reese. Fix you up.”

“ Sounder. They have all the names to make you think it’s just something you take for a headache... Where is my sister’s body?”

“ I’m sorry, Ms. Reese’s body will be incinerated as per her wishes.”

“ No! At least let me bury her! Have a funeral!”

“ That will not be possible, Mr. Reese,” said the nurse. “ No legal instructions were given. The law is quite clear on this matter.”

“ What the hell has happened to this world? ” An elderly woman in a wheel chair and two young woman appeared by the door. “ So, what’s wrong with her? Too old?”

The sergeant checked a hand-held communication unit. “ The supplementary report on you Reese says you are a martial arts practitioner. You could face additional charges...”

Andy closed his eyes. He offered no resistance as they placed the expandable plastic restraining rings around his wrists. “ We will have no disruption of terminal clinics,” said the sergeant.

“ Might disturb the dead,” said Andy.

“ Sergeant, get him the hell out of here. We have clients,” said the nurse.

“ Yes, Sergeant, we wouldn’t want the lady to have a heart attack and die.”

“ Bring his ass to detention.”

Andy struggled at first as they led him out the front door into the darkened shopping center’s frozen parking lot. The cold night air stung his glazed eyes and sweaty skin. “ I don’t get it, you’re arresting me and they just killed my sister.” The camouflaged cruiser van was parked a few feet from his Saab and next to a prodigious snow bank, brightened by the moonlight. He looked up at the stars and across the snow sifted mountain peaks. “ Are you really a pro-termination advocate, Sergeant?”

“ You mind your own fucking business, Reese,” she said as they swung open the van doors.

As the team prepared to push him inside, Andy looked her in the eye.
“ It doesn’t make it right. My sister is dead,”

She chuckled and shook her head. “ Don’t be a wimp.”

* * *

Cody slowed his shiny red BMW and the engine whined. He popped a second bright green pill. “ You know, sometimes it’s best to shut your mouth when it comes to the law, Andy. You want a pill? It’s FDA legal. You’re not supposed to drive with it, but what the hell.”

Andy shook his head. He was not going to lecture Cody again about the stupidity of keeping his blood levels elevated. “ Thanks for getting me out.”

“ You owe me, man. How about taking in some virtual stuff back in the apartment?”

“ No.”

“ When’s your trial?” he asked and flipped the dash monitor.

“ I don’t know. I’ll leave it for my lawyer whenever I get him.”

“ You got the cash and you’ll get off. That’s the way it works in this world. What about your Saab?”

“ Impounded.” A knife pierced the forehead of the man on the screen and blood erupted from the fissure above his eyes. “ I don’t want to watch this, Cody.”

“ You’re becoming a real prude, Andy, you know that?” Cody flipped the screen and two bare ass women kissed on satin sheets. Andy banged the power switch. “ Hey, man, there’s no violence there.”

“ Just get me home.”

“ That first flick, my friend, The Cruzean Connection, was number one at the box office last year. Wicked gore... Number one, man.”

Andy grabbed the door handle. “ Number one... So what? That means nothing.”

“ You need to get laid, pop some colored jumbos and chill out, man. Even the President pops colored jumbos. But she was a super model, what do you expect?”

Andy looked at Cody’s distorted face as the car slowed and stopped abruptly. “ I’ll see ya.”

“ I can call the escort service. Get somebody over here before midnight. Keep you company. Or maybe some virtual servicing.”

Andy did not look back and marched up the snow bank walk. “ Don’t waste your money.”

The moon hovered near the mountains and the stars crystallized over the snow capped countryside. Cody’s car fishtailed at the corner and disappeared behind the next street’s chunky snow piles. Despite the frigid air, Andy dallied on the walk and tracked a pinpoint satellite across the sky dome. Since he was a little boy he was in love with the sky; enough to earn his doctorate and study radio and optical signals for a living. When he was not driving to the **SKYSCAN** facility atop the mountain, he was aligning his home computers into the world wide and orbital tracking systems. The sky was cold and silent, and in some ways preferable to the media noise and astounding lack of perspective everywhere. And now Kate was dead.

He clicked the front door locks with his remote and continued up the walk. The inner stairway was warmer and he pulled back the Velcro on his

coat as he trudged up the carpeted stairs. Kate's narrow face, vibrant eyes and ready smile stayed with him to his apartment. Her bone disease was not on the list of miracle cures over the past few years. He pushed his remote again and opened the apartment door. Kate would have faced a long battle with constant, pain inducing therapy, but he could not support her termination.

His computer turned on the lights and then spoke to him. "Room temperature: seventy-two degrees, Andy. Is that acceptable?"

"That's about the only thing that's acceptable," he said as he threw his coat over the kitchenette chair. "I want to scan."

"Program executing."

He opened the refrigerator and took out nutrient juice pack. Across the room his large desk monitor brightened with the **SKYSCAN** program. He pushed the straw into the juice pack and pulled back his desk chair.

"Inner solar system, Jovian moons."

"The observatory wishes you to scan the Sigma--"

"You will implement my program, computer."

The screen fluttered and a numbered program flashed in yellow letters on a blue background. Kate never understood his fascination with astronomy. She lectured him about his hobby diverting from true employment. The lectures stopped when the doctorate degree was posted on his office wall at **SKYSCAN**. A crisp image of Jupiter cast a red glow across his sweatshirt once the room lights dimmed. He stared at the multitude of swirling gaseous bands and the eternal red spot, but quickly was lost in thoughts of Kate riding her bicycle years ago before the millennium. Mom and Dad were still alive and the wrecking ball had not leveled his family's

house in Tobin Springs. They even chain sawed the huge pine tree planted by his father when Andy was three years old.

“ Sleep soundly, Katie. Sleep soundly.”

He had the computer utilize the Ptolemy telescope in lunar orbit to scan the crater packed moon, Io. Once it implemented the visual scan of the Jovian system with other frequencies, Andy leaned back in the chair and closed his eyes. Somehow he would have a church service for Kate. He grit his teeth and shouted. “ I just don’t understand why killing yourself is legal!”

“ Is that a question for me?” asked the computer.

“ Sure, you answer it.”

“ McCain vs. Oregon in 2012 specifically allowed the states to allow an individual to end-”

“ Shut up!”

“ Is that a command?” asked the computer.

“ No... no. I want to send my extraterrestrial message now.”

“ You have an incoming e-mail from Cody and an attached list of escort services.”

“ Table it. No, delete it. Bring up my salutation on the hyper-band.”

“ Implementing...” Andy watched as the Ptolemy image swung to another Jovian moon, Ganymede. Andy studied its cracked surface. “ Do you wish a live message or the recording salutation to the stars?”

“ Recorded.” He did not have the will to record a new message.

“ First signal on audio and the rest hidden.”

Andy soon heard his own voice, lively and not affected by grief, broadcast from the powerful gain antennas in earth orbit. “ This is Andrew James Reese speaking from the planet earth from the year 2015 AD.”

“Do you wish update of year?” asked the computer.

“Sure, why not?”

“This is Andy James Reese speaking from the planet earth from the year 2016. I am human being, a scientist, twenty-four years old, searching for intelligent life in the universe. By the time you hear this message I will be long dead, that is of course unless you are cruising around us here on earth.

My planet suffers not from poverty but from abundance. Things once deemed important are now annoyances. There are no consequences as we sink in our own prosperity.”

“Do you wish me to automatically update your age on your birthday?” asked the computer.

“Yeah...”

“By the time you get this message, maybe we will have straightened ourselves out. We used to live in a world that wasn’t perfect, but at least a place where most people were guided by an inner compass.” Andy smacked the desk. “For all the good this will do. Maybe all civilizations become self-indulgent ... I can’t believe Katie is dead... Computer.”

“Yes.”

He stared at Ganymede’s shattered crust. “Bring up family album, lower corner of screen. And then I want access to the historical photo sites.”

“Do you wish me to list viewing history?”

“No, I’ll determine where I’m going,” said Andy and he sipped the nutrient pack’s cool liquid.

“Message is repeating to the galaxy.”

“Are you cracking a joke, computer?”

“Do you wish me to?”

“Forget it.” A picture of Kate and himself on their bikes, appeared in the monitor’s lower corner. “My God, what have they done?” Katie was so innocent after she lost her tooth and her poodle eyes pulled him back through the years.

“Do you wish access to family video and audio disks?”

“No.” Another picture of Andy and Katie at a zoo in Denver prompted him to clamp his wet eyes. He folded his elbows on the desk and cried into the stuffy darkness. Maybe the computer could not sense his grief or his distraction and it said nothing as he wept.

2

The repeating beep awakened him and he sat up in front of the monitor.

“ You have an incoming message,” said the computer.

Andy squinted at the clock in the lower corner of a refreshed image of Jupiter. “ Who’s calling me at three-fifteen in the morning?”

“ It’s odd.”

Andy yawned and for a moment actually forgot Kate was dead. “ I really need to get to bed... What’s odd?”

“ The nature of this reception is incoming.”

“ You said that.” Andy stood and chucked the drink pack in the wastebasket.

“ No, from space. A disturbance.”

He turned and faced the Jupiter image. “ Disturbance? I don’t see any disturbance.”

“ The disturbance is around Ganymede and it’s not visual. It more of a distortion. I don’t have the ability to tell you why.”

“ Somebody will pick it up.”

“ No, it’s on a thin waveband, directed off a local cell tower.”

“ What? Are you sure?” asked Andy.

“ It has visual content and is current. Not recorded.”

“ Okay, let’s see it. I want to get some sleep.”

“ Full or partial screen?” asked the computer.

“ Just play it.”

At a dark table two men with white straight hair and smooth bronzed faces sat in carved wood, high backed chairs next to a middle-aged woman with red hair. They were clad in pale smooth green cloaks within a snowy image of sandstone columns and a long open window. Craggy mountain peaks were back dropped by a magenta sky, layered with swift moving deep gray clouds. The man in the center spoke English with a Jamaican or Caribbean accent “ We wanted to contact you directly, Andy. We see you and are aware of your work with **SKYSCAN.**”

“ Who are you?”

As the old man continued the signal popped in and out like a bad microwave transmission. “ We speak to you, Andy from the six hundredth year from the Unification of the Seraph enclave on Ganymede. You see us within a compressed frequency through time.”

“ What? Computer, is that true or is some Supernet hoax?”

“ The signal is emerging through a distortion on a thin beam directed to your SI provider on the tower. Whomever is on this frequency is really transmitting to you.”

“ Why are you calling me?”

“ You called us,” said the woman.

The third man spoke. “ We live in a genetically pure time. No defects allowed. Everyone is free to pursue and recreate. To be virtual and non-offensive. Perfection and equality for everyone.”

Andy fell back in the chair and stared at the fleeting clouds.

“ Then you’re telling me you are from *my* future?”

“ We have no countries, cities or states,” said the woman.

“ Only the individual and the pure state, enforced by the Moloch.”

“ They have evolved and cannot be considered human any longer,” said the old man.

“ We hide here, in the Ganymede enclave, away from earth and the Moloch, because we care about the values of the past,” said the woman.

“ What do you want?” asked Andy.

The old man’s bushy white brows slowly rose. “ The Moloch will eventually find and possess us. We need your help.”

“ My help? Why?”

“ Because,” said the other man. “ The essence of true humanity involves dealing with fallibility and imperfection.”

“ I’m not quite sure what you want.”

“ Even we have lost much of our humanity and we fear our signal may be gathered by the Moloch even at this distance. We want someone closer to antiquity to go back in time.”

Andy grinned. “ This *is* some kind of hoax.”

“ You just lost your sister. The right of termination had begun, Andy. You will live another eight years, but you will be interned for challenging societal changes.”

“ Eight years?” The signal faded to snow. “ Computer, get it back.”

“ It is no longer there,” said the computer.

“ Was transmission really through time?”

“ I don’t know. It came through the cell tower and the SI provider.”

Andy clamped his fists and closed his eyes. “ This is somebody’s idea of a bad joke. How did they know about Kate?”

The computer did not answer, but the signal crackled back on the speakers, and the three forms appeared.

“ Can you see us, Andy?” asked the old man.

“ Yes, I see you. Who are you?”

“ You probably want to know how we know about your personal history.”

Andy leaned toward the screen. “ Yes, and my sister’s death. I don’t find your knowledge amusing.”

“ We banked antiquity sequences when we first received your signals. It may be some time before actual extraterrestrials receive the signal. Our settings are gathered through time.”

“ Okay... Why do you want me back in time?” he asked and then he laughed. “ Wait a minute... This is ludicrous.”

“ Extrapolations can highlight certain people and events back in time,” said the woman. “ We have reason to think you can help them change the course of human history.”

“ Change?”

The old man cleared his throat. “ The Moloch and our world won’t allow simple human responsibility in the face of technological change.”

“ We believe,” said the woman. “ We can extrapolate alternate histories. There are a number of important themes in your time, Andy, that if altered, may temporarily restore humanity’s potential. Whether such a change is permanent is a matter of debate even among us.”

Andy stood and his smile stuck to his face. “ Come on.”

“ It’s true,” said the old man. “ You can prevent certain trends.”

“ I’ll assume you people are real,” said Andy. “ How do you, if you are ahead in time, transport *me* back in time?”

“ Gathering your signal in an open area. Waves returned through time,” said the old man.

“ Waves?”

“ Gathered back. We can’t be taken back from our time because the waves radiate backward, but we can gather you and continue you backward. We have awaited such an opportunity. You are the one.”

“ Right,” replied Andy, chuckling. “ Sure... sure. Tell me how.”

“ You must be in an open area and have a signal. A wireless phone from your era. We know where your apartment building was located, but we need a signal.”

Andy’s brow tightened as he concentrated. “ There’s an open field near my apartment complex.”

“ Good. You need to be in that field at night so the frequency is the strongest into space. We will gather it and you.”

“ How far is the field from you right now?”

“ Two hundred maybe three hundred yards. Hey, wait a minute, I’m not volunteering a trip through time.”

“ Go into the field only when you feel comfortable and use your phone device for two of your minute intervals. We will gather your location and we have your assigned frequency.”

“ Just where do you want bring me?” he asked, still not convinced.

“1939 AD, Andy. 1939, just before the Twentieth Century’s Second World War.”

“ Look, like I said. I’m not volunteering for anything. I still don’t believe this is even real.”

* * *

At first he went out to the field on a lark, but some forlorn hope kept him out there every night for a week. He placed his boots in the snow expanse and within foggy breaths lifted his cell phone toward the stars. The first night he remained out long enough to see the moon set behind the mountains, but as his confidence in the Seraph transmission waned, he limited the sessions under the stars. By Monday he attempted a two-minute signal and Tuesday night was cloudy.

“ Why go back through time anyway? And why don’t they hear me?”

The computer was still aligned to Ganymede. “ The signal no longer exists, Andy.”

“ Maybe it was a fluke or worse a prank,” said Andy.

“ The signal was real and originated, according to scans on a direct path to Ganymede and the cell tower. Then to the SI interface.”

Andy peered through the windowpanes at the stars above the field. “ I see what I was doing.”

“ What was that?” asked the computer.

“ Putting up this elaborate smoke screen because of Kate’s suicide.”

“ Andy.”

He turned from the window and back to his desk. “ What?”

“ The signal was real.”

3

March was colder than February. Some nights when he mourned Kate, he would engage in protracted martial arts bouts in the gym. When in a more sedate mood he donned his heavy coat, gloves and orange stocking cap, and trekked into the field, sometimes spending hours outside before leaving for the observatory around midnight. He believed what the computer told him about the signal's authenticity, but he kept the information to himself as well as the Seraph offer to send him back through time.

For weeks he studied disks of the period almost eighty years past. He read about the unfathomable atomic bombs ending the war and how earlier the fearful British population listened when German V-2 rocket engines cut high in the air as a deadly silence preceded the inevitable explosion. The rise of fascism across Europe and the spread of Japanese imperialism were not of interest to him in grade school, but images of the demonic Adolph Hitler's dramatic speeches to prodigious, swastika waving crowds unfolded on the monitor. Goose-stepping soldiers and behemoth tanks rolling into helpless cities were captured from old black and white films. The magnetic hold of Hitler and the brutality of the Nazis shook him. In 1939 the United States, led by the charismatic Franklin Delano Roosevelt, had not fully recovered from a time of great unemployment and diminished production and faced the

prospect of fighting a war against Hitler and the Japanese. Why would those people on Ganymede want to send him back to such a tumultuous time?

As Andy studied the incoming data sheets from last night Wilton moved over to the radio telescope monitors. “ Andy, may I have a word with you?”

He looked up and focused at Wilton’s creamy blue eyes. “ Something wrong?”

“ Well, actually yes. Dr. Bowers has asked me to speak with you about your probation from the arrest at the clinic.”

“ What’s the problem?”

“ Apparently some bureaucrat in Washington has caught wind of your court hearing and-”

Andy stood. “ Listen, I was sentenced to a thousand hours community service and I have to attend reorientation classes.”

“ Yes, we know you’re working on correcting your original behavior, but you’ve actually been out protesting in front of termination clinics. While we can live with the arrest record...”

Andy laughed and shook his head as he paced. “ Isn’t that nice of you? My sister is murdered inside one of those horror chambers and you can’t live with the fact I got a little upset.”

“ She made the decision and she had the right,” said Wilton.

“ The right to kill herself? She was depressed because of her disease! Screw you, Wilton!” He cut across the room and scooped his jacket off the chair. “ Screw **SKYSCAN**.”

“ Do I treat this as a resignation?”

Andy stopped at the door and turned before he slammed it. “ You treat it any damn way you want. Why don’t you watch TV tonight? Maybe you’ll see me get arrested again!”

* * *

Andy held a candle with Kate’s college photograph taped to the base. He marched with the protesters in the freezing parking lot air, only fifty yards from where she was murdered. As the crowd sang a hymn similar to a Gregorian chant, four security team members emerged from a camouflaged security van near the department store. Marching in a termination clinic protest was a direct violation of his parole. When one of the members pointed at him, Andy veered away from the protest, but all four security people followed him down the concrete sidewalk along the plaza store fronts.

He darted around the corner and the candle flame went out as he scuttled along the building. Within the crisp white halogen light, he spotted a metal fire ladder. He dropped the candle with Kate’s picture as he raced along the cinder blocks. With a running leap, he scampered six feet up the wall and grabbed the ladder’s bottom rung. Before the security team rounded the building, he had hoisted himself up the cold metal bars.

Blue and red security lights flashed across the gravel roof and the silhouetted metal ducts. Headlights swung around back as another van raced into the rear lot. An amplified voice shook the winter air. “ We know you’re out here, Reese. You have violated federal parole and will be arrested!”

Andy stopped near the steamy vents up front, removed his cell phone from his coat and dialed his computer. The line rang and he had the

computer connect to the SI provider, as he looked skyward. Spotlights hit the upper ducts now and another team member spoke into the amplifier.

“ You have obstructed access to a federal termination clinic, Mr. Reese. We will take you in by force if necessary!”

Jupiter was only a brilliant speck in the sky without the computer’s enhancement and his whispering breath was, but hazy puff in the freezing night. “ Where are you?”

“ Mr. Reese, you have violated federal law and a Supreme Court decision. Please surrender peacefully.”

About the time he heard them ascending the ladder, a red celestial body expanded near Jupiter. “ What the heck is this?”

The enlargement continued until the body assumed the size of the moon, but with orange-red and yellow pock marks and indefinite brown edges. A single blue beam, outlined an aqua spiral speeding toward him. His ears and hands stung from the cold as the spring coils narrowed and surrounded him within a ten foot radius. Through spaces between the coils he saw several armed and uniformed security team members climb onto the roof.

“ Where is he?” shouted the a little guy with a stogie stuck in his mouth as he raised his weapon.

Andy recognized the Seraph woman’s voice. “ In the field, something blocked your signal. We couldn’t align and gather you until now.”

“ They’re going to capture me.”

“ No one can see you.”

The aqua spring began a slow rotation as the team members crisscrossed the roof, sometimes passing directly through the spirals. The

presence of the men and women in combat fatigues and the confusion in the plaza parking lot was obliterated by the rapidly spinning blue and green spirals. The old man's voice punctuated an accelerating blare. "You are being brought to a city America, the state of Iowa, in June, 1939, AD."

"I am very leery of this."

"Do you want to stay in your time?" asked the old man.

"Be arrested and die in eight years? Oh, no..." Andy stared into the aqua rings. "How can I change anything?"

"A man named Herman Geiger, who died sometime at the New York World's Fair, in the summer of 1939, is a pivotal figure in time. The police or government covered up his death because of the pending war. We only know there are no records about him after the summer of 1939."

"How is he pivotal?"

"Geiger's works are buried in archival capsule recovered from the 1939 World's Fair in what used to be New York City. It was originally placed in a vault during the antiquity period of September, the twenty-third, 1938, and thousands of years later extricated to the safety of the enclave. Geiger's works relate to humanity's reaction to the tidal wave of technology in the then twentieth century."

Andy's feet were no longer on the roof stones, but floating within the blue-green light. The loud clatter rushed toward him like the approach of an oncoming ultra speed train as he yelled. "Is Geiger in Iowa now, is that it?"

"No, you need the means to survive as well as travel to the fair. We located in that same year, a young girl, Lucy Apel, recently graduated from school. She won a writing competition, stating what the New York World's Fair meant to her. The people at the fair paid her expenses to travel from her

father's farm in Hancock. That's all we know. She lived another sixty years. But she corresponded with Geiger."

"So, you're telling me I have to stop Geiger from being killed at the 1939 World's Fair in New York?"

The woman spoke again. "We can only calculate alternate histories. From what we see, Geiger's impact will cross all tiers of society by 1957, AD. Large rallies were held around the United States and the world. All we are asking is humanity be given the gift of thought and consequences of actions."

"I don't understand."

"To think. To put technological change in context, historically and ethically. We won't even begin to tell you the vapid morality here. Just look at the burgeoning apathy around you."

"I'm not a do-gooder," he shouted.

"No American died in the Second World War when Geiger lives. His words fueled a movement called America First that garnered popular support against that world war."

"Wait... I've watched disks of Hitler and the Japanese. Just what does Geiger's not dying at this fair do?"

"Britain was invaded, but held as a protectorate. In fact Germany turned toward Russia and won. But the guerrilla war continued in Russia until pro-democracy governments in the surrounding ethnic countries triumphed in 1955. The Japanese Empire slowly disintegrated and China emerged as a power in 1986. Hitler left the United States alone. He died from reaction to drugs, diabetes, and a heart condition in 1949. The thousand year Reich soon imploded."

“ I don’t know if I want to get in the middle of this.”

“ Meanwhile Geiger and America First are given credit to having spared American lives. Geiger directs his attention to the human response to technology, pressuring lawmakers to set standards and not let technology run wild. He chides the churches and volunteer organizations into fulfilling a role and most of all he gets people to accept responsibility for their actions in his social technocracy movement. He makes people think about the consequences of their actions. Geiger lives until 1996.”

Andy closed his eyes briefly in the spiraled light. “ This is all very complicated. How can you possibly know what will happen if Geiger lives?”

“ These calculations are possible... We have explored the lives of hundreds of people. It is Geiger who can make the difference. But we still have the Moloch to contend with.”

“ You have mentioned the Moloch before.”

“ We fear them,” said the old man. “ You don’t understand. Humans became their own evolution. They are capable of much in their evolved structure.”

The woman spoke next through the battering cacophony. “ They can overtake human consciousness.”

“ What?”

“ They are highly evolved, Andy. You are being brought back now as we speak.”

“ I am? But I don’t understand how the Moloch can effect consciousness,” said Andy within the aqua glow.

“ Their thoughts are pure energy. They possess human minds.”

The signal was weaker as the woman continued. “ You stop them forcing them out of consciousness.”

“ I don’t understand.”

“ The Moloch will not remain in consciousness unless forced out.”

“ I don’t get it. Are you telling me the Moloch are back in 1939?”

“ They will cease to exist in the future if Geiger lives,” said a third voice, barely audible. “ Maybe things are the way they are because *they* killed Geiger. We don’t know.”

“ No, let me think about this,” said Andy, rubbing the back of his neck.

“ It is too late. You have already been gathered,” said one of the men.

“ Good luck,” said the woman.

“ Your acceptance will make a difference,” added the old man.

“ God’s speed.”

“ Wait!” The loud crescendo slowed and bright breaks appeared in the spiral. “ How do I contact this Lucy Apel? Where will I find her?”

4

Daylight pierced between the aqua rings as the entire spring diminished in intensity. An overhead red traffic light flipped to green as a truck engine grumbled, and several antique black cars shifted forward. Engine exhaust infiltrated the disintegrating spirals. The traffic moved and Andy stood on an uneven cement sidewalk with grass shoots sprouting through peripheral cracks. The distant drawl of a baseball announcer broke the warm humid air near the hardware store's green and white awning. Andy located the wood veneer floor model radio wedged between glossy painted push mowers and wheelbarrows with varnished wood handles. The sun heated his face as he ripped off his bulky winter coat and tossed it into the trash barrel. As he approached a man in a white shirt and maroon bow tie swept the sidewalk under the awning. "Excuse me."

The man looked up and leaned on the broom. "Yes, sir, what can I do for you?"

Andy studied the wood veneer floor model radio with its knobs and numbered dial. "I know this maybe a crazy question, but... where am I?"

The man yanked out a red handkerchief and dabbed his forehead. "Let me get this straight. You want to know where you are here in the city, or you want to know what city you're in?"

"Both."

"What are you ridin' the rails or somethin'?"

“ You mean, did I arrive by train? No.”

The man raised his wiry brows and stuffed his handkerchief back in his pocket. “ Cards are on the radio, son. Where do you think you are?”

“ In the Midwest, hopefully Iowa.”

“ We’ll you’ve got the state right. You’re in Des Moines. On the corner Hamlyn and Main.”

“ Then this is Iowa. They did it...”

“ You know of any other Des Moines?”

“ Can’t say that I do.” Andy panned the sky. The he swung his eyes down to the constant traffic and the men and woman along the far sidewalk. Some of the men spotted hats and spit polished shoes. The ladies looked formal in their bright dresses and spiffy footwear. He spun around when he heard the bat crack on the radio and the crowd roar as Rogers Hornsby smacked out a base hit. “ Rogers Hornsby... Unbelievable.”

“ He is an unbelievable player.”

“ Is this 1939?”

“ Now you want to know what year this is?” The man placed his hand on Andy’s shoulder. “ Mr. Horton keeps a bottle of moonshine in the cabinet upstairs. You want to sit down and relax? Or maybe you’ve already had a drink.”

“ No, no... How far is Hancock from here?”

“ Hundred and fifty-two miles, straight up Highway 17. Through corn, corn and more corn.”

Andy’s mouth hung open. How would he live in 1939 with no means of support? He needed a plan, but his mind stalled as he studied the brick storefronts. “ This is incredible... Where’s the library?”

“ Huh?”

“ The library, I need to look up something.” The man studied Andy’s sneakers. “ Work boots.”

“ Fancy... Library is five blocks down on your right next to the new post office. You walk to the flag and you’ve gone too far.”

“ Thank you,” said Andy and he extended his hand.

“ Name’s Tom Stanley.”

“ Reese, Andy.”

“ You take care, Reese, Andy. Come back if you need anything.”

Andy nodded and half smiled as he drifted down the sidewalk. His heart thumped when he peered through the haze hanging over the long street. The ball game mixed with the click and grinding of manual transmissions and crunched sand pebbles along the sizzling asphalt. A dull melancholia settled over him like the haze. Minutes ago he was in the Colorado cold, protesting his sister’s death and pursued by the security team. This city’s life was slower. He sensed a lack of urgency, unlike in his own time, as he plopped himself down on a wood bench.

Two ladies in colorful sun dresses carried huge strapped pocketbooks down the sidewalk. Atop a black, fluted metal pedestal the large clock’s pointed hands inched toward noon and the aroma from a nearby delicatessen wafted across the street. Dark cars with freestanding headlights and bright chrome radiator grills glistening in the sunlight were parked at an angle to the curb. The downtown had several department stores and an overflow of small shops still survived a decade of depression. He had studied the Depression on his disks and was aware Franklin Delano Roosevelt, former Governor of New York, was the President of the United States.

Perplexed, he slid out his leather billfold and flipped through numerous plastic credit cards and a wad of crisp bills gathered from the ATM last night. But last night was seventy-seven years from now. The wooden phone booth near the drug store across the street reminded him of technology's continuous march toward his own time. Any information about Geiger and his views on technology was probably at the local library.

His concentration was shaken by a red tractor with oversized, tread tires, and an empty wood framed wagon in tow. He stood, as he did at baseball games for the national anthem, and now accepted the last vestige of humanity, trying to salvage basic human values in a future world gone bonkers, had sent him back to change time.

With Kate so brutally taken away, he sensed a civility and purpose he could not fully comprehend. In the baking sun he thought about the baseball game, and while he was not sure about details of Rogers Hornsby's career, he knew Hornsby was a great ball player in this era. He strolled in the shadows under the storefront awnings and stared further down the sidewalk at the limp post office flag in the heavy air. Hancock was a hundred and fifty-two miles away, and somehow he had to get there and survive.

Ahead, the library's tapering slate capped dormers added a gothic flavor to the brick exterior. Andy checked the street and darted through the wavy, rising heat. He stepped onto the sidewalk and trotted up the library's sharp granite steps. Inside the open doors, he sensed the brutal pace of the next century did not exist here, and rather than succumb to this period's imperfections and lack of technological prowess, he felt at ease.

Spinning metal pedestal fans propelled the scent from hundred of stacked books outside. Translucent burnished yellow shades were positioned

halfway down the open windows. Andy crossed the creaky, smooth wood floorboards and stood in line behind a woman at the main desk. Two little kids clung to her faded green, polka dot cotton dress as the librarian vigorously stamped black ink onto the manila renewal cards.

The curly haired girl smiled at Andy, giggled and buried her face into the mother's dress. "Thank you, Mrs. Beecham."

The woman glanced at Andy, held the books under her arm and brought the children out the front doorway. Mrs. Beecham raised her dark brows at Andy. "Yes, sir."

"I don't know where to begin," said Andy.

"What can I help you with?" she asked.

"I'm looking for some books by a man named Herman Geiger and some information on the New York World's Fair."

She nodded and rounded the wood counter. "You'll find information about the fair in Life Magazine in the reference room, along with the other periodicals of course." She pointed toward a high ceiling, apricot walled room with long tables and stacks. "Now Geiger. Yes, I'll check the cards for you."

"Thank you."

She tiptoed to several oak filing cabinets between the doors and first set of paned windows. A slight hunger in his stomach reminded Andy of his predicament. Mrs. Beecham slid open a long tray filled with tabbed, alphabetized cards. She fanned through the cards, but and stopped abruptly. "Yes, we have several of Mr. Geiger's books here at the library. Mr. Geiger was born July 22, 1900 in Gutenberg, Germany."

“ Good. Thank you,” said Andy as a stocky man in a checkered blue jersey walked through the door. Almost immediately he stared at Andy, furrowed his brow and veered into the stacks. The old man’s warning from the Seraph enclave on Ganymede sounded like an alarm bell through time. He wondered if this man was controlled by the Moloch.

“ Sir,” Said Miss Beecham.

Andy’s head snapped back. “ I’m sorry.”

“ If you will come with me...”

“ Sure.”

She moved her slight frame like a fluttering butterfly through the arched opening to the next room. Andy briefly saw the man in the checkered shirt glaring at him from the side stack. “ You know that man?” he whispered. “ The man in the checkered shirt. He just came inside.”

“ Mr. Billingsly? He is the high school principal.” She stopped at the end of the stacks and raised her index finger to the duodecimals traced in white ink on the stitched bookbinding. “ Smart man, but very impatient.”

“ I’m sure he is.” Andy glanced back, but was still uncertain how he would discern an individual controlled by pure energy consciousness.

“ Sir,” said Mrs. Beecham, halfway down the stacks. “ Progress in the 20th Century, from last year. The Great Technocracy from 1932. The Ethical Response from 1927. This book is available in both English and German. And The Future of Man from 1921, also available in both languages.”

“ I appreciate your help.”

“ My pleasure. If you have any additional questions I will be at the front desk..”

“ Thank you.”

As she pranced back, Andy dragged all four bound books off the wood shelf and hauled them to slate tables under the large half moon windows. Two sedans and a wood station wagon in the dirt parking lot caught his eye as he lowered the books onto the table. At the desk the high school principal handed a book to the librarian

Andy pressed his lips as the car raised dust in the parking lot outside. Traveling to Hancock and locating Lucy Apel seemed prudent, or he could go to New York City himself. The Seraphs must have considered all the alternate time lines and finding Lucy Apel seemed his best option. Hitchhiking a hundred and a half miles across the plains was feasible, yet, how would he survive? During the Great Depression soup kitchens and churches helped the downtrodden and bums rode the rails. He tapped his fingernail against his teeth and opened Geiger’s book written just last year.

A black and white photograph of Geiger in a bow tie and dark suit, was smooth behind an onion skin page. He held a webbed pipe in his hairy left hand, his eyes were probably brown and intense, and he had a charming smile. Andy checked the bold caption.

Professor Herman Geiger

“ Well, Geiger, they say you’re a pivotal point in time.” Andy watched the green leaves flutter above the parking lot. “ And it’s already summer. I wonder, Professor, if you’re still alive or dead at the fair.”

The concise biography indicated Geiger was born on July 22, 1900 and taught history and philosophy at Gutenberg University until 1933. When Hitler came to power in January, Geiger left Germany and settled in Sweden briefly. By 1934 he was teaching at a small college in upstate New York, extolling a powerful theme called Social Technocracy. He did not want to thwart technology but live with it and use it prudently. His seven ethics in progress involved technology serving man and man serving an ethical perspective.

Andy leaned back in the chair and stretched. The Seraphs must have believed Geiger would implement his philosophy if he survived the fair. Andy was unsure how such a philosophy could erase a history laced with turmoil and societal laxity. “I’m not up to this.”

Without a notebook and paper he would have to absorb what Geiger wrote in his books. He settled back in the chair and skimmed the pages. As the afternoon progressed, his eyes blurred and through hunger pangs, he stopped understanding what he read. He pushed the chair back, stood and walked to the window. Geiger simply wanted people to think about their actions and take responsibility. The pedestal fan breeze cooled the sweat beads on his forehead as he gazed outside. Geiger insisted on people solving problems with unusual solutions.

Andy meandered to the reference area and glanced at the Des Moines Register. He searched the stained wooden shelves for a biographical section. Locating Geiger before he was killed at the fair meant checking his status at Amesbury Union College. He slid out a thick almanac from 1938, remained in the stack aisle, and thumbed the clean paper pages to a personalities section. Past movie stars, presidents, and sports heroes, Geiger was listed as an

author was a full professor at Amesbury. He shut the book loud enough to echo throughout the room and then pushed it back through the empty slot in the stack.

As he plodded back to the table he took his cell phone from his pants pocket and smiled when he realized it was useless. Nor could he could not talk, fax or even e-mail. He jabbed the **SEND** button anyway and listened to modulating tone. The LCD readout flashed: **NO SERVICE**. He dropped the phone back into his pocket.

At the newspaper stack he stopped, grabbed some recent editions and found a red leather chair next to a small oak table. He opened the pages to drawn, black ink advertisements, depicting men in sharp, neatly cut suits and woman in buttoned down dresses. Appliances were bulky and antiquated, but appeared advanced to the people of this time. Prices were absurdly low. He observed stories references to FDR, Clark Gable, Joe DiMaggio, and Adolph Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland. On each printed page he checked for pertinent information about the New York World's Fair, but instead found reflections about Neville Chamberlain appeasing Hitler at Munich last September. The Seraphs had given Andy awesome power, but tampering with history and a madman like Hitler seemed beyond his capacity.

He closed his eyes. Working on the Apel farm might allow him to survive in this time and tag along with Lucy Apel to the New York World's Fair. Fashioning that scenario and preventing Geiger's death would require fast talk and luck. He opened his eyes and gripped the edges of another newspaper from three days ago. Buried in the back pages was a story describing the numerous national pavilions represented at the fair. A mammoth white ball called the Perisphere was visible beyond statues

positioned along a long mall. The Perisphere was a geodesic dome, coated with a white stucco and located exactly next to a high, thin pointed Trylon obelisk. Only financial considerations prevented an even larger Perisphere. The article referred to FDR himself having opened the fair in April.

Andy's stomach now demanded food and he set down the paper. Without further delay he would need to find a soup kitchen or food pantry and have to think about sustaining himself back here. He folded the paper and was about to stand. Another front-page headline caught his eye.

Local Girl Wins Fair Contest

Hancock...Friday... A local Hancock High senior has won a writing contest, sponsored by New York World's Fair's President, Grover Whalen. In a statement released Friday, Whalen announced Lucy Apel, a class valedictorian, was selected from five thousand nationwide finalists to travel this summer to the New York World's Fair.

Miss Apel's essay was drawn from the fair's overall theme, the World of Tomorrow, is entitled "How We Face Tomorrow." The fair, constructed on 219 acres of a former Flushing garbage dump, now features pavilions from 60 countries, dramatic water fountains, and an ever present alabaster geodesic dome and pointed obelisk. From her family's farm in Hancock, Miss Apel's father indicated the family may travel to New York this summer and visit

with relatives in New Jersey. Miss Apel will accept the award in late June and receive unlimited admission to the fair for her family.

A full printing of Miss Apel's essay is recorded on page 45.

Andy folded the heavy white newspaper to page 45, and in the cool fan currents, pressed it on the slate surface. Cradled between a corn and soybean report and a story of municipal improvements was a half page depiction of Lucy Apel's essay.

How We Face Tomorrow

by Lucy Apel

Class of 1939

How wonderful it is to live in our time. Surviving hard times not only allows us to see where we have been, but now we can imagine the hope of tomorrow. We are alive at the cusp of great innovations and inventions, destined to ease the burdens of mankind. In New York City men have provided us a glimpse into the future.

Did you know great concrete highways will extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific? Thirty years from now you will step inside your streamlined car in Boston and drive at high speeds along roadways to Los Angeles, California. You need not stop at traffic lights or wait for pedestrians to cross the street. You can see this at the General Motors Futurama at the New York World's Fair. Our lives will be streamlined.

In my kitchen I will be surrounded by new inventions. Dishes will be washed automatically. Vegetables need not be canned in a time consuming process, but will be taken simply from a freezer and heated on the stove. A working robot called, "Elektro," is already drawing in visitors at the fair. Maybe he will sweep the floor for me or change the bed linens. All of these innovations will give me more time with my family.

And at night we will no longer listen to radio. Strange as it seems, something called television will show us movies on a small screen in our living rooms. Such a demonstration is already in place at the RCA exhibit at the fair. I will sit with my husband and children and be brought to far away places.

Maybe we will live a place called Democracy, although you are supposed to wait a hundred years according to the people at the fair. They say everyone will march and sing in unison in the world of tomorrow. How we face tomorrow is critical. I look forward to tomorrow's innovations, but I always remember what my father has told me since I was a little girl: "If it sounds too good to be true it probably isn't." My father can be cynical and I am wide eyed. I say let us dream about the future and explore the innovations at the fair, but let us always use what my mother calls, "common sense." In closing let me use one more quote. The German philosopher, Herman Geiger, captured the essence of what is to come when he said ten years before he fled Nazism's unfulfilled promises. "My eyes marvel at the future, but my feet are firmly planted in the past."

Lucy Apel

April 19, 1939

Hancock, Iowa

“ *Geiger.*” Andy fell back in the chair. “ She read Geiger. That’s the link in time.”