

Heaven's Final

By
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Chapter 1

This splendor I see around me is mine forever now; I will never allow anyone to take away my view of the world again. Jody sat content in the warm sunshine that poured through the large hospital window as he remembered a time when he couldn't have seen the green viridian tree tops wave against the soft blue sky. He smiled and moved his finger slightly on the chair arm to move his chair closer to the window so he could gaze into sky's depths. He felt cheerful in the bright room. Yah, comfortable and happy in my life prison chair as I wait to be released from the hospital. Well, I do feel happy.

He watched a baby sparrow, gray with light spots, hop to the ledge and look at him as if to speak. Jody thrilled at the sight. Thrilled that he could see the little bird visually instead of only imagine it inside his mind, though, he was still amazed at how accurate his imagination had been.

His heart expanded in tenderness towards this little fellow looking at his monster self through the window. Then another sparrow flew to the ledge, and another. The first sparrow looked up as a blue jay screamed from a distant tree and circled far above. The prize was a crumb of bread in the first sparrow's curved beak. The other sparrows jostled back and forth around the bread, pecking and dancing, their tiny feet making patterns in the dust and grime of the window ledge.

The blue jay screamed at them and flew down and landed on the ledge. The sparrow dropped the treasured bread and flew towards the sky following its brothers and sisters who had already scampered in every direction. The blue jay quickly bowed its head to gather in the bread.

Jody glared at the blue jay with anger and determination. Suddenly no matter where it pecked it couldn't reach the bread. It pecked at the ledge and raised its head at the sky screeching its frustration and anger. Again and again when it bent its head down to grip at the bread, its beak hit wood or steel instead of the soft lump.

Finally, as if exhausted from such futile effort, the Blue Jay's body lay down next to the treasured crumb. The breeze blew against the window rattling it and ruffling the bird's feathers, but it lay still, frozen in place by death.

Too late. Zee could see Jody's soul glaring through a thick fog. She tried to hurry, but it seemed as if he were at the other end of a long, backwards telescope. Jody's soul actually flickered and darkened as she wafted to him.

She reached out an arm as if she could stop Jody's mind from killing the bird. She was too late. Oh, Jody, no. Her arm went through his head and then his limp, crippled arms that lay resting atop his chair. Finally, with much effort and struggle, white fog swirling around her ghostly motions, she grasped each of his young shoulders, held on, as best she could, then reached around him with invisible arms and gave Jody as warm a

hug as she could while she whispered into his ear. “No, Jody, no.”

Jody hadn't heard the whisper so he continued to use his mind to lift the dead bird upside down into the air. Its wings spread at an awkward angle and its beak opened as if to call out, but no sound came from its throat, nor did the wind sing against its wings in flight. Like a wet mop, the bird flopped back down on to the ledge and lay horribly still.

Jody, slammed it against the ledge once more, to no avail, then he focused his mind into a spark that he sent inside the bird. He tried to look out of its eyes. Nothing. He squeezed its heart like he had seen on television, up, down, up down, up down. Quick, start the little heart. Get it pumping again. Nothing.

Breathe, his mind screamed into its tiny body.

Suddenly, Jody felt full of contrition as his memories turned to Zee and shame enveloped his mind and wouldn't let go.

Please live, he mentally screamed at the bird, *Please*. The bird lay where it had fallen.

Memories of Zee who had given him so much as a neighbor, friend, and mentor filled his mind. Since her death, he could only feel guilt and shame at the memory. Do it for her.

Live, he whispered into the bird's mind with his plea once more, *live*. No response. Please, he begged, but only to himself this time. The bird lay frozen in death; even the breeze had died down, not even a feather moved in the wind. Finally, in a weary acceptance of fate, Jody built an invisible hand-plow shape with his mind, moved it through the glass to the windowsill, and shoved the dead bird off the edge and out of sight.

I don't care, he screamed inside himself. I don't care. With his computer turned off, his scream played silent and still in the white, sunlit room until he croaked out a horrible sounding groan; his own voice ever worse than the computer one. But it had eased the vibrations swirling inside his head. For a while, he wasn't sure if he wanted to explode, or cry. Now, he felt overwhelmed by contrition. Never again. Zee, I promise. I won't ever do it again.

A drop of wetness threatened to roll down his cheek until he squeezed his eyes to stop it. Then the world looked blurry and out of focus because his eye lashes were wet. Think about something, anything but Zee. She won't like what I did to the bird. It was less than a year since her death, and he still struggled to deal with his guilt and loss.

But, Jen's ok. That's a blessing. My little sister. But not little any more, he corrected himself, big sister now because she has recently turned thirteen. A teenager now. That made him smile. Thinking of home, he supposed his mother was ok too, though he didn't think he cared. Jen told him that mother had stopped drinking. Well, I'll wait and see.

He turned away from the window just as his doctor entered the room squinting his eyes at the bright sunlight. Dr. Avers was a close friend of his Uncle Louie and so treated him good. Jody liked him. His face was loaded with wrinkles and wisdom. Once Jody overheard him insist to a group of doctors, “This young boy Jody will receive every advantage possible in this hospital.” The memory pleased Jody because Dr. Avers had tried to make that statement come true.

Both his eyes, damaged during the mental struggle with Lucian, were fixed and functioned superbly now thanks to Dr. Avers' work and influence. Plus, his chair was turned into a super computer with smaller buttons that were instantly sensitive to his finger's touch.

Proudly, Jody thought of the programs Dr. Avers' had stored in his chair computer; not as good as the hospital one because that one had more power and used experimental mind links, but superb, just the same. Wonderful. Jody smiled at Dr. Avers to show his pleasure. It was Dr. Avers' pet project that got him working on such a super computer. Jody wanted him to know how grateful he felt.

A sudden flash back of the day he woke up in the hospital bed, barely able to see anything except light, with the memory of red blood filling his left eye, and the horror of the way his mind had been used put a shadow on the day, but he cast it off. At times, he still blamed himself for Zee's death, but intellectually he knew it had been Lucian using his mind. Emotionally, it had been a pull through extremely long and hard months of recovery.

That was because he owed her so much. He'd never known how intelligent or capable his mind was before Zee helped him learn more about the world and look how I repaid her. His body shuddered at the thought. But now, that he was recovering from the painful memories, he knew enough to keep his telekinesis ability hidden from everyone.

He liked Dr. Avers which made it hard to keep the truth hidden from him, but even Uncle Louie, who had taken over Zee's role of mentor and friend after her death, didn't know the full truth of what had happened that day. Jen might know something, but they had never spoken of it in their few telephone conversations from the hospital. Jody had determined that he should never speak of it to anyone.

Dr. Avers, still squinting his eyes as if the bright sunlight bothered him, sat down on the bed next to Jody's chair, folded his arms across his lap, and smiled pleasantly. "How are you today Jody?"

"Ok," Jody tried to say, but no sound came from his chair computer. Jody suddenly remembered he had turned it off. He grinned and flicked it on with a light touch from his index finger and repeated his statement. The raspy, mechanical voice that he hated to hear, said, "I feel ok."

"Good, I know you are well physically, but nice to hear you admit you feel fine. I wanted to see you before you left the hospital. Your mother has found an apartment for all of you and I made sure it accommodated your chair and other needs. The rent is very low, based on income, and your mother is getting some help now. When your Social Security comes through you will be able to find something larger. I ordered a lift for the tub so you can take baths. Also, I have ordered a daily nurse for you."

"Is the apartment furnished?" Jody asked.

"Yes, and with a new computer system." Doctor Avers smiled because he knew this is what Jody was really asking about. "But like I told you before, don't thank me. It's all part of my experimental study. Government funded. By the way, your continued emotional and mental health is important to the study; so, stay happy." He smiled then gave Jody a stern look, "I need to chart your growth through the next few years."

"Don't worry. I love it? Thank you?"

“Free donation; just accept it at that and let it go. Your sister can use it for schoolwork too. By the way, Meyers helped with the initialization. Your Uncle Louie's a big computer buff too. Did you know?”

Jody smiled at this. It was news to him. “No, I didn't.”

“Well, he is and he already put his e-mail address and phone number in your computer. He also supplied you with, as he called it, “Lots of goodies.”

“I can't wait.”

“I know. But before you get in too deep with all those gadgets and games, I insist you begin the schoolwork I set out for you. Ok? It is part of my program.”

“Oh, yah, I'll do that. It's what I want to do too. I want to learn as much as I can.”

“I know you will. The nurse will bring you down to the ambulance after I leave, but I'll see you in a month at my office.”

Dr. Avers reached down to this small, pale, young man, with the crooked smile, a grown up of 17 and a half, as Jody reminded everyone, but who looked as young as 10, who sat in his tiny wheel chair as if he carried the world on his shoulders. He had a head of wild, brown hair, and Avers gave it a rub, then he gave Jody a long hug before he turned and left the room. He had grown to like Jody and hated that his early life had been so depraved. Great intelligence should be nourished, not thrown away. Dr. Avers shook his head at the stupid goings on in the world, a world that allowed a genius to wither away in a dark, back room. Well, he isn't in a dark room now. He was amazed at Jody progress, and could hardly believe the leaps in mental ideas he came up with. Such a nice young man.

But at other times he noticed Jody's emotions take a deep hold, enough to send him spiraling down vast avenues of depression that could last for days. The poor kid had paid for his first eye operation dearly; torture had been his price for a simple eye operation. Doctor Avers cringed at the thought. A price he paid to those nameless, Nazi like fools who wanted to use him for their own purpose. I intend to keep looking for them, Dr. Avers promised himself. I don't intend to let them to get away with what they did to Jody.

Jody felt pleased with the hug. His prior experience with doctors didn't include hugs of kindness. Yes, he liked Dr. Avers, he thought as he turned his chair back to the large bay window and smiled. A huge robin was on the grass of the courtyard digging for something and more sparrows were chirping and flying back and forth from tree to tree. Ah, the little sparrow found the piece of bread. This time it took it into its beak and flew off with it. Was it the same little bird? Jody hoped so. Just forget about the dead one. It was just a mistake, but a nagging, inner voice reminded him that he had accumulated too many mistakes to be forgotten easily.

Another glance at the courtyard brought back the happy memory of his first sight after a life of near blindness. How could he ever forget his first look at real birds as they flew through the air, in this very same courtyard? Yet, good mixed up with bad at the memory of his trips to the special ward of this hospital so those doctors could test him for Lucian. Don't let memories darken this happy day, he ordered himself. Why can't I just keep the good memories and throw away the bad ones?

The true purpose behind Lucian's drive into his mind was still a mystery. One that would surface one day, Jody was sure of that. What had been Lucian's purpose? Jody suspected it had to do with his telekinesis ability, but he wasn't sure why. Uncle Louie was still searching out the story, and Jody was sure that an important detective like he was could get the answer. Even without knowing about my telekinesis talent? Hope so, cause I don't know how I'd ever talk to him about it.

The fact that the monster Lucian, who had done this to him, was his father, he also kept from Meyers. He didn't know exactly why, shame probably. He supposed that Jennifer or his mother might have told Uncle Louie, but he had never spoken of it. If what he suspected was true, then he could be sure that Lucian would try again. Next time he meant to be ready. This means practice, practice, practice.

Jody heard the nurse come into the room. He turned his chair to look at her pretty face and dark curly hair and smiled, then allowed himself to be pushed out and down the hall to the waiting ambulance.

Chapter 2

As the ambulance drove up to the building Jody couldn't help but feel his curiosity build up about the new apartment. He thought that it had to be better than rain pouring through cracks in the ceiling in his old room. He had told himself that he didn't care where he lived, but maybe he did a little. He felt the ambulance come to a halt and his chair jerk at the sudden lack of movement. The attendant stood up and bent down to undo the locks on Jody's chair. Jody smiled at him to keep his nerves steady and his hands from shaking. He could have spoken because his chair computer was on, but he chose to stay quiet. The ride had tired him. Perhaps it was just the emotion of coming to a new place to live. He didn't expect to tire as easily as before when it had been a struggle to hold his head up. Better now and my fingers are more nimble, easier to push the right buttons. I am a walking machine now, well, a rolling one. He smiled at his own joke. A year ago, all he could do was lay in bed, blind and dumb. Now I get to roll along.

He tried to roll himself, but the attendant grabbed hold of the hand bars on the chair, then rolled him on to the lift and off when it settled to the ground. Jody noticed that the building had a large glass front door with a security lock; he could see his mother sitting at a bench inside. There's Jen. His excitement doubled. My little sister Jen.

At the sight of Jody on the lift, Jen had opened the glass door and began running to him with her arms out. Jody watched her golden hair billow in the wind, away from her dusky face as if she were a mermaid beneath the sea. Her short sleeve top blew up above her white shorts as she ran, exposing her tanned belly. Jen looked ready for summer, but it is only spring. Jody smiled at her impatience. Jen's glowing energy washed over him as he watched her run. It happened each time he saw her. Imagine living for so many years and never seeing how beautiful his own sister was.

His chair didn't roll forward any further before Jen reached him and enclosed him inside her thin arms. Jody laughed out loud. He could tell his laugh delighted her because she laughed with him.

"Oh Jody wait until you see the nice apartment we have. It's way up on top. Higher than ever and you can see the city down below. It's so cool. I can look down on all the people walking and riding in their cars and there's a park...."

Jody was suddenly delighted to be home, just to hear his little sister prattle and talk and color anyplace she was in with excitement and life. Yes, life. He smiled and his eyes squeezed shut with happiness for a minute. He tended towards glumness and depression; he needed Jen's sparkle. She is the twinkle of Christmas lights around a tree, the glitter of sun on dew, and the most alive person I've ever known.

Jody loved and needed his sister, had always needed her. Now that he felt older and more mature in the ways of the world, he realized that he needed to be close to her so

he could bask in her childish belief in goodness. She shared that outlook with Zee. He had spent his first weeks and months in the hospital thinking of nothing else but the fact that he had murdered Zee, his friend, mentor, neighbor, and teacher. Now, for his own sanity, he needed to keep thoughts of her in the background. He hurriedly pushed away the memory. Today is for living.

He let Jen push him on the elevator while she spewed out her verbal description of their apartment. His mother smiled down at him as the elevator rose up to the 8th floor and Jen's top of the world.

Jody noticed that his mother, even smiling, looked haggard and wrinkly, as if someone had stuck a pin in her balloon face until it popped. Part of the reason, he supposed, was from her lack of MD red wine and beer. Her hands told the tale as well. They were old and wrinkled like Dr. Avers. But he was old, how old is mother? Thirty five, fifty? He suddenly realized that he didn't know his own mother's age. She must have started her family older than usual, with himself, he was sure, the first accident. Her dark, sad eyes, and pale wrinkles running across white blotched skin told tales of long memories best forgotten. She looked and moved like a broken women. Lucian's work again, of this Jody was sure, everything turns back to Lucian, the man who gave her his sperm. The monster.

Lucian had been a monster even to little Jen and when Jen had finally been able to visit him in the hospital, after the kidnapping and trauma, he'd noticed that her eyes would film over, now and then, as if hiding a memory she couldn't forget. Memories of Lucian touching her, hitting her, killing her, until Mr. Smith had saved her. That much Jody knew because Jen had told him about it. He also knew that he must stop thinking of the past right now or he would spoil her beautiful day. Keep your cool. Keep calm. Smile fool, show your happiness. It almost worked, almost.

Chapter 3

Detective Meyers closed the manila cover over the McCarthy case which gave a slight final dignity to the lady who'd been stripped, cut in various places and then left for dead. With his other hand he pulled another manila folder from the left side of his desk. Damn paper work. Not for the faint of heart. He smirked at the pile of folders still stacked and waiting to be solved. A damn chore he hated, going through the unsolved crimes, but had to be done. No choice. Besides he'd wanted to be a detective, hadn't he? Damn right, and as soon as I get through this stack of dead files and unsolvable crimes I am going for a breath of fresh air to blow off the stink and grime.

He opened the next folder. Ah, this one wasn't near so ugly. But it hurt, hurt badly. He sat with the cover still half open as his mind flipped back to the events of that day: Zee laying on the ground dead and Jody fallen to the cement, crying and sobbing. He'd liked Zee, maybe loved her, had wanted to see more of her. Impossible now.

The thought of Jody made him give a quick look at the calendar. Damn, Jody's being released from the hospital today. I almost forgot. Need to get over there. With that thought, Meyers slammed the folder closed, grabbed his natty, faded sweater off the coat rack and headed out the door.

As he drove the few miles to the new high rise where he'd helped the family get an apartment, he thought again of Zee. He remembered how her body looked beautiful even in death, so beautiful he could have sworn a rose fell right out of the air to lay on top of her body. It was that image that made him insist her funeral should include only roses. Jody had seen it too, but his emotions had been messed up, so Meyers only had the memory of the look on Jody's face for proof. The phantom rose had disappeared as he watched. True or not, he wasn't sure, but the image wouldn't shake out of his memory.

The remembered scene brought another question to mind about the case, and that was the question of how Jody got down those two blocks alone, a long way to travel for someone who could hardly roll in a wheel chair, even a motorized one. But mostly, I want to know how he got out of it. How did he get on to the sidewalk in front of the porch stairs and leave his chair five feet behind? A lot of questions still to be answered.

But I've got to take it easy. Don't want to jar my fragile friendship with Jody and Jennifer. For some reason those two kids have become important to me. Not just a case anymore. Hah, I am just growing into a soft hearted tough guy in the old age of fifty-five. He smiled. Just an hour, he told himself, then I'll get back to those unfinished case folders.

But the memories kept coming. He remembered how he'd stuck with Jody even after the ambulance came and took Zee away. Finally, Jody had to be rolled into the next ambulance. Later, after Jody had become more coherent, Jody told Meyers what had happened but he was never sure if he'd gotten the whole truth. Even though Jody reciprocated his friendship, Meyers knew he was holding back vital information. Something strange had been going on between Jody, Zee, and Jen's kidnapper, Lucian. The perp who I let get away. I intend to remedy that one-day. His kind needs to be locked up for life, and I intend to see to it.

He needed more information. What he knew was little enough even after Jody explained events: He knew Jody's sister had been kidnapped by Lucian, knew that

Lucian had used Jody to kill Zee. But the real unknown question, the question Meyers was determined to answer one day, was why. Why did Lucian want to use Jody? What was it that Jody had that Lucian wanted. Jody hadn't told him but after talking to Jody's sister, Jennifer, and mother, Meyers thought he could make a few good guesses. Even Jennifer hemmed and hawed when he'd asked for the truth, but she is only a child, they both are.

Meyers believed Lucian was mixed up with Sylvia's death too, but he couldn't figure out how. The autopsy determined that Zee's fellow employee had died from a broken neck after the fall off the ladder. So what is the puzzle? Meyers didn't know but was determined to keep searching for clues.

Zee had spoken of extra-sensory perception regarding Jody and darned if he wasn't coming to the same conclusion. Something had happened inside Jody's house that day that defied all rational explanation. The house looked as if a bomb had exploded inside it, with things thrown everywhere. An iron thrown into the plaster wall and stuck there? That didn't make sense.

The way Jody had explained it to him was that he was just a smart kid who the doctors wanted to use for experiments with prosthetics and experimental medicine. That is enough right there to put the son of a bitch in jail, and his doctor friends, if I ever find them. But any scum who would take a little girl and try to kill her and Zee just to force Jody to work for him was horrible beyond any rational reason. Especially because I liked her, damn it. No loved her. He knew deep down that it wasn't over, that Lucian would try again for some unknown reason, and he intended to be there to stop him. I'll get the SOB next time, that's a promise.

Lucian shoved another sandwich into his widening jaws. His normal body stood a 5' 10 slim and tall with olive skin, and to pick up a hundred pounds extra weight, he'd need to eat a lot more than usual. Not much of a problem, but it will take a lot of energy to turn a slim man into a fat lady. If he had to rely on body fat alone, he'd never make it, but his expert ability at using hypnotism kept people from looking close. People see what they expect to see. He'd used that ploy often. So I don't need to eat a hundred pounds of food. He chuckled and sipped on his milk shake, just fifty.

He'd noticed his perfect specimen walking down the hospital corridor, about to tend to a patient in the next room from Jody's. Jowl cheeks and a rump that swung up and down as she walked; that white lady had toughness sticking out all over her. Not too many patients would deny her orders. That was exactly what he needed right now, so time to grab another sandwich. Jody will do what this nurse demands. I need to get that kid using that special mind I gave him. Put his talent to work.

The fat lady was already chopped, bagged, and dumped into the Detroit's garbage system. Handy to have an incinerator near by. How lucky can you get? Lucian chuckled his grating laugh then sat down to eat a can of chill, then a few cans of stew and even a whole chicken. After he ate the chili he put a can of stew into the same pot and set it on the hot plate to heat.

Soon he felt energetic enough to jump out of his skin and he began his transformation into the fat broad, a Mrs. G. M. Brown. He puffed out his face, cheeks and chin first and went to the mirror. Perfect, his eyes were now squeezed together with

wrinkles at their edges, but his mouth needed adjusting. He used his last mental image of her face to create wrinkles around the mouth and bag the chin a little more. Next he ballooned out in the breast and buttocks not forgetting to grow big arms and legs. He kept the feet little and dainty. People's minds would do the rest.

In all it took him less than half an hour to restyle himself into Mrs. G. M. Brown, voice and all. Then he worked on character for a few minutes longer. Character was the easiest part when he had need to kill his specimen because he could rob the mind of their short term memory and a considerable amount of their long term just before he killed them. He didn't always do such a complete job, murder was messy and best left alone unless necessary. He thought he needed this change to be professional enough to fool Jody's ripening mental perception.

After a few struts in front of the mirror, he thought he looked and acted so much like Mrs. G. M. Brown that her own family wouldn't know the difference. Which reminds me, need to get home and fix dinner for that S. O. B. who calls himself my fat husband. Lucian chuckled. This time his chuckle came out as a soft famine alto. Hadn't been a women since 1950. This should be interesting. Kick some ass and big enough to do it too. Ha. With that Lucian grabbed up Mrs. G. M. Brown's purse and left to catch her bus for home.

Chapter 4

Dr. Aver left Jody's room still feeling upset and puzzled about what had happened to Jody, and in a hospital I have worked at all my life. He had searched for doctors who might have preformed the operation on Jody's eyes, and neck. No results. It was as if they were phantoms or shadow people. He was angry at his lack of results. Pissed off, as my granddaughter would say.

The vision of his granddaughter brought a smile to his face as he walked down the hospital corridor. A strange nurse startled him out of his reverie by waving at him from the elevator. He nodded. This is a small, good hospital and I mean to keep it that way.

I intend to get to the bottom of it now that I have the time to spare. Only one more patient today. He had been cutting his practice down to a trickle because he was ready to retire to a nice seat beneath a willow tree and trout stream. Well, might need to put that off for a while, but I'll get there eventually. What is important right now is to learn more about what they did to Jody and why. I need to help Meyers. He isn't a doctor so may not pick up on the nuisances that happened here, right in this hospital, Boulevard General. The place where I practiced medicine all my life. Yes, I am angry.

He knew how valuable eyes could be, he'd known patients who would have given one of their arms for one new cornea, but they were put on a very long waiting list like everyone else. Not Jody. What I want to know is how did those doctors, who ever they were, get Jody two new, perfectly functioning corneas when most people need to wait a long time to get one? And the nerve attachment for his throat isn't even on the market yet. He'd checked and looked at research reports too, nothing. Experimental, all the way, and illegal. Though, he had to admit, it worked. Damn well. And Jody's fingers, too.

He'd talked to the head teacher at Jody's former school. She told him that Jody hadn't been able to move his fingers voluntarily before; that his fingers curled up when he was in a distraught state. Dare not trust her opinion, she hadn't cared enough about Jody to remember him and had to look his status up in her dusty records. Although if what she said was true, Jody was lucky that his fingers hadn't curled permanently, his toes had. He would never walk, that couldn't be fixed even with a million dollars, and a few million must have been spent on Jody. Those phantom doctors must have had a lot of funds to play with. Why? Who had that kind of money to spend on a young, unremarkable boy. A blind and crippled boy who, according to Meyers, had lived in a rented house riddled with bullet holes.

We'll someone had money to use on Jody and he was determined to find out who. He had searched for the paper work, but it had disappeared as if it'd never been. How this could happen in a modern, well-known hospital with an impeccable reputation was beyond his understanding. He had learned that what they called ASRP, a new rehabilitation program, had been housed in a special wing and paid for by people with bank funds from overseas, accounts closed now according to Meyers. Then all lines of possible search had cut off. Well, I am not the damn FBI. What can I do? He'd even tried to interest them, but they were too busy on other more important things, this was small potatoes to them.

The biggest question was why? What did Jody have that they wanted. He didn't believe for a minute Jody's explanation that they just wanted to use him for tests. They'd

experimented on Jody, but that wasn't their true goal. Too much money had been spent on a little kid from the ghetto. Has to be more to it.

I like Jody. He is young enough to be my grandson. And by damn, if someone treated my grandson like that, I'd get to the bottom of it, quick. It wasn't so much that they had physically hurt Jody, which they had. It was that they treated him like a piece of trade goods, something to be used for their benefit. But what exactly was their benefit?

He stepped up to the nursing desk to look at Mr. Sandston's chart.

We'll there was one thing he knew, Jody was smart, very smart and he was hiding it. Afraid to bring it out, afraid to be used again. But he wanted to see Jody succeed in life. He suspected that with his brilliant mind, Jody could fly through college and beyond, in spite of his handicaps. He was sure of one thing about Jody, he craved knowledge.

Dr. Avers smiled as he thought of the computer Jody would find in his apartment. It had been enhanced far better than his wheelchair computer. He felt pleased with himself. With the special program, Jody can sit back in his chair, turn it on or off, and flip through web pages as he needed with his mental mouse. He could direct his mental mouse anywhere on the computer screen with only his mind. He'll love me for that. His typing will still be slow, but I'll fix that better as we go along. This is my invention and Jody, with his superior intelligence, is the perfect person to give it its first trial. Dr. Avers felt good as he imagined Jody turning on his home computer for the first time and finding the special program from the hospital.

"You have your own room Jody," Jen said as she pushed Jody through the door of their apartment, "I got to sleep with mom and little John cause all we could find was a two bedroom. It's kinda crowded. Sorry" Jen shrugged.

"Sorry! Little sis? Remember what we used to live in?"

"Yah."

"This runs circles around it. Maybe I am glad I couldn't see where I lived most of my life."

"Gee, I never thought of it that way."

Suddenly Jennifer had stopped talking. Jody realized Jen was looking back into the past. He didn't want that so he changed the subject.

"Hey, sis, where's the computer that Uncle Louie put his name in? Dr. Avers told me we had one."

Jen's smile turned huge again. "Right over here."

Jody rolled himself to the corner in the dinning room then smiled at the first sight of the new computer. It gleamed black and silver in the dingy, beige dinning room and its screen was big, real big.

"How do I turn it on? Do you know?"

Just then they heard a loud male voice walk into the apartment.

"Uncle Louie," Jen cried as she ran to him.

"Hi pudding," Uncle Louie grabbed her and swung her around. "Almost getting to big for me now."

"Never."

“Hey Jody, looks like I got here just in time.” He reached over to Jody’s chair and flicked a small switch near Jody’s fingers. The computer turned on right away lighting up Jody’s smiling face.

“Yes,” Uncle Louie said, “You have almost as good a computer at home that you did in the hospital. With a few nice add on’s.”

“Great, really great.” Jody said and blushed as Uncle Louie tussled his hair with his large hand.

“And look at the bookcase full of books. I added a few of my own. Sorry it might be a squeeze to get at them.”

“Oh, I’ll get them down for Jody.”

“I know you will, sweetheart.”

Uncle Louie sat on Jody’s bed. Let me see if your bookstand still works smoothly. If not, I’ll fix it. Jody moved his finger just so and his bookstand slid out from the arm of his chair. Then he moved his finger again and it slid back into its slot.

“Good. That chair of yours has more gadgets than 007.”

Meyers quickly looked over at Jody to see if he got the joke. A lot of times he didn’t because he had little experience of the real, normal world. References had a way of sliding right past him.

He said, “You, young man, have a lot of catching up to do.”

“I know who 007 is Uncle Louie; I saw one of those movies in the hospital.”

“And the Six Million Dollar Man too, which I can only dream about.”

They all smiled at such a dream.

“You’ll have a lump sum of money from Social Security soon and for the rest of your life; it might add up to a million by the time you get to be a hundred.”

“That’s too far away to even imagine.”

“Yuck, me too,” Jen said with a wiggle of her nose. “Mom has some cake and coffee ready for us.”

“Then lets eat.” Uncle Louie said as he followed Jennifer to the table.

Jody noticed that fractal images had popped up on the computer, his favorite screen saver. Dr. Avers must have put all my study programs in here.

“I’ll stay here and play.”

“Oh no you don’t. Not while Uncle Louie visits. Besides I need to get back to the precinct in a few. You can dig into the computer then. My e-mail address is already in there and I intend for you to use it at least once a day. Kaput?”

Jody couldn’t help smile at his uncle. Well, sort of an uncle. “Got it,” he agreed.

“‘Let them eat cake,’ said Marie Antoinette to the mass of humanity and so we shall.” Uncle Louie said as he pulled out a chair for Jennifer and took a bite of cake.

Jody didn’t get at his computer for a long while after Uncle Louie left because just after he left, the nurse from the hospital, Mrs. G. M. Brown, came in with a scowl on her face. Oh, oh, what did they send me? Jody wondered as she roughly rubbed his arms and legs, flipped him over on the bed and began to massage his back. Her plump, middle-aged hands were heavy on his muscles. Then she roughly slapped him back into his chair with the expertise of long practice. She sure isn’t like those pretty nurses in the hospital.

She checked out his bathroom facilities and that he had enough supplies to cover the next month.

“Just relax honey. I’ll be here every day for a long time,” she told him, “Twice a day. You need anything, just wait till nurse Brown gets here.”

Jody nodded his agreement thinking frantically. Dr. Avers didn’t say a nurse would come the same day I got home. This is terrible. Need to do something.

“Ah,” he choked out through his voice computer, “You are only a temp. Two weeks the hospital said. Then I need to get a nurse from an agency.”

“That so?” she said as she made his bed and fluffed up his pillow.

“Yah, hospital just sends a nurse part time. I’ll need full time help, every day.”

Mrs. G. M. Brown made her face stern but didn’t say anything more until she was ready to leave.

At the door, she turned to Jody’s mother who was sitting in the living room watching television with Little John on her lap and repeated her statement. “I’ll be back tomorrow at ten sharp, then again at six. Twice a day, doctor said.”

Mrs. Boyd got up to see the nurse out of the apartment. “Yes, thank you.”

Jody breathed a sigh of relief when the nurse finally left and headed towards the computer.

I don’t like her for some reason, didn’t like the way she handled my pillow. Jody had lied to the women. He didn’t need a full time aid. His mother could help more now that she wasn’t drinking all the time. And Jen helped too when she was home. I need to Ask Dr. Avers to get me a new nurse. Tomorrow. Today, I check out my new computer.

Jody noticed that Jen looked over at him when the nurse left, but then had enough sense to leave him alone with a wave of her hand. She knew how desperately he wanted to get at his new computer. He silently thanked her for her acute sensitivity to his needs as he searched for the new programs Uncle Louie had put into the computer and a quick search for Dr. Avers’ e-mail.

Dr. Avers checked into Jody’s problem. He agreed that Jody didn’t need a nurse in which he clashed. Mrs. G. M. Brown did not come back to his home. Not as Mrs. Brown anyway.

Lucian was raving angry when he was barred from Jody’s care. It damaged his plans to draw Jody out and continue his education. Lucian thought he knew enough about Jody now to push his talent into a high degree of ability without the use of the doctors. They were long gone anyway. It’s the kid’s young legal age that protects him, but soon he’ll be past that too. Well, kid gloves are in order next time I step into his life. I may have been too quick to reinsert myself. The next plan will take more cunning and thought. The next plan must work, or it’ll be my own head on the block.

Chapter 5

"Jody, Jody," Jennifer called out to him as she came in from school. Guess what?"

Jody rolled his chair into the hallway to meet her. It was months since he got out of the hospital and he was playing at designing a new software program he hoped to sell someday. So far, he'd been able to get away with home study except for one class a week. He had argued that his home computer accelerated his learning faster than if he had to travel back and forth to college every day. A note from Dr. Avers had settled arguments from his other instructors.

He was lucky to be in a joint high school college curriculum. Mr. Skinner, his instructor was fascinated with his level of knowledge in computer software and gave him the go-ahead to work at home. Jody had planned on that fact to lure him in. It was Mr. Skinner who insisted that he push at his learning hard. He called Jody Mr. Sponge.

"What do you want little sister." Jody asked.

"Oh, you'll never guess, not in a million years."

Jens voice pulled him out of his reflective mood, as it always did. He watched as Jen almost flew into the hall, her golden hair streaming behind her. It framed her light, tan colored face to perfection. Her books slammed down on the small table. His mother called out from the kitchen, "Afternoon Jen." then she stepped into the hall too. Her hands were coated with flour as was her apron.

Not bad. He was beginning to like this new mother who tried hard to play catch up with all the things she'd neglected for so long. This was Make Bread Week, real honest to goodness home made bread. Jody smiled at the picture she presented with white flour trickling off her hands onto the wooden floor of the hall.

He turned his face back towards his excited sister. But when isn't she excited? He smiled and wondered if every schoolgirl her age was just as bubbly or was she unique. He liked to think the latter.

His chair computer was on so he asked her what he should guess at. He kept his computer voice on all the time at home. It was only when he went out that he turned it off. He told himself he didn't want strangers to intrude into his thinking, but knew the underlying reason was that he didn't want people to hear his scratchy voice. The doctors had improved his connections, but couldn't seem to improve the sound quality, though they had added emotional inflection. Well, don't kid yourself, buddy, you're glad to have it. Admit it.

"So what is the surprise?" he asked Jen who was now dancing around in circles inside the little front hall as if his voice didn't annoy her at all. His mother laughed, threw up her hands and went back into the kitchen.

"Tell me or I'll run you over with my chair."

"Catch me if you can."

Jody chased her around the table knowing he couldn't catch up with her.

"Ok, I give. Tell me about your great, big surprise."

"Sure you give up?"

"Yes."

"I met my old friend Angela at school today. You remember Angela. She used to be my friend when we lived on Farnsworth. She was visiting with her class for a

basketball game, and I saw her from way across the gym and yelled and yelled, and she saw me too, and we both jumped and jumped until I ran over to her side and..."

"Hay, slow down, you're going a million miles a minute. Repeat slowly please."

"Oh, Jody, you know what I said. Besides that's not the news, not the real news anyway."

"Well, what is the news."

"It's Zee. Well, I mean her house. Oh I used to love going to Zee's house."

Jody sat and listened with a bemused grin on his face, almost sorrowful.

"Remember how we'd go to her house and Zee had to help you up the stairs. Do you remember?"

Jody's smile shriveled up tighter at the mention of Zee. He had been unable to see her house during the visits, but he certainly remembered it. Not a house, a home. He remembered the first time he went to visit her in her home, he'd felt so excited and anxious, as if her place would have magic inside of it. And it did, a hundred books on every subject. Books he was blind to except for a vague wavering shadow. But Zee had picked each book up and let him hold it while she told him the title and author. Then she took the book and read parts of it to him.

Over the long winter months, she read many of those books to him. She lived by herself, but used to say her books were the real treasure, and the only thing no thief in Detroit wanted to steal. He remembered her light laugh every time she said that. No more laughter now, and Jody shuddered again, keeping his lopsided smile but his eyes grew cynical.

"Her house?" he managed to stumble the words out through his computer.

Jen had stopped her prattle and dance as if she understood that she had stabbed Jody in the heart.

"Go on, tell me?"

"It's for sale, didn't I say? Oh, Jody, its for sale." Standing still now, her eyes looked soulful and huge with love. He knew those doe eyes were her way of getting what she wanted. And if he had his way she would, anything she ever wanted. She stood now, as if holding her breath while waiting for him to comment.

Jody smiled and watched as she relaxed into a relieved pose that assumed she would get what she wanted. Were all women like this?

"Ok, it's for sale, but it might be too much for us to pay." Jody said.

"Oh, no, Jody. It's a bad neighborhood and, you know, houses are cheap. Well, not so bad a neighborhood but the houses are cheap anyway. Everybody knows that."

"You might be right Jen." Jody felt his own excitement grow in a slow upward spiral. "But we would need to have a ramp built so I could go in and out by myself. It's pretty convenient here with the elevator and other people around."

"Oh, I don't care about other people, I just want to be in Zee's house again. Just once. Can we at least go and see, can we?"

"Mother," Jody called as he rolled towards the kitchen. "You need to make a phone call right away." Then he remembered, "Please."

"Can't you make your own call," his mother said as she pushed bread dough into small loaf pans.

"No, because you need to use the phone book and look up a real estate agency. Zee's house is for sale and I am going to buy it."

“Oh, Jody, oh, Jody.” Jen called from behind him, jumping up and down as if she was still a ten year old.

“That lump sum I got from the Social Security needs to be spent anyway or they’ll take it back. I’ve never bought a house before. How do I go about it?” He asked his mother?

“Don’t know. I ain’t lived in my own house since I was a wee child of five or so. Where’d we put the phone book? Anybody remember?”

“Wait. Mom don’t bother. I’ll call Uncle Louie.”

His mother went back into the kitchen to check on little John.

Jody pushed the auto dial on his chair computer. He had Uncle Louie’s personal phone number which would get him past the front desk of the seventh precinct.

“Meyers here.”

“Hey, can I entice you to some fresh home made bread for a favor.”

“For real, fresh bread, anything, just name it. I can smell it through the phone.”

“I just learned that Zee’s house, you know, the one on Farnsworth, is up for sale. I’d like to buy it, but I need information about the realtor.

At the mention of Zee’s name, detective Meyers felt a touch of sorrow flutter behind his breastbone. “Her house got out of probate quick? For sale now? Well, I’ll go over there right now and check it out. It should have a sign posted on the lawn. See you in about an hour. And have that fresh, warm bread ready. He hung up.”

“Uncle Louie will set everything up just right. Oh, Jody I am so happy. Can you imagine living in Zee’s house and filling it up with our own books and I could go to the middle school near by and Little John can go to Ferry School just like I did...”

Jody just shook his head at Jens spew of words. He suddenly felt very proud that he had some money in the bank and could give Jen what she wanted. And myself, too, he added, don’t forget yourself. His imagination was already adding a first floor addition because he knew he couldn’t go upstairs, but that would be ok. I am used to being excluded from upstairs. Just being inside Zee’s house again would be worth so much. In the short year they’d known her she had dug a hole into both their hearts that would never close. The memory of his past life, a life of laying in bed at home and at school with only Jen for company flittered across his mind, but he pushed it away again. Best to forget and keep growing. Get strong, get ready for when *he* comes back.

Chapter 6

Zee hovered over Jennifer and watched as Jennifer explained to Jody about her own house. She had been drawn close by Jennifer's excitement. Now she smiled at the young girl she thought of as Jennifer Angel, so named because she gave up her so much of her time for Jody. She is a selfless angel and Zee was glad for her happiness. Jody's aura was different; it could be dark and cloudy at times. As Zee hovered near him she sensed once again a current of hate and anger. Thoughts about Lucian, she was sure. Some how I need to end this hatred for his father. Zee reached out and hugged Jody as he sat contemplating how he could get back at Lucian. She ruffled his hair, but naturally her playfulness had no visible effect.

"Oh, Jody, why can't you hear me? You have so much power in that mind of yours. Surly you can hear an angel talk?"

Zee smiled as Jen ran back into the kitchen. I almost got through to Jennifer the other night. Does she have a few of those extra-sensory genes too? Zee smiled to herself. It had been her philosophy while alive that everyone had the ability, but few people chose to use it. She still thought this was true. And now I know so much more than before. But not how Jody will come out of this next trauma in the near future.

The events on earth and the fate of its human beings were hidden from her beyond a few weeks time. She could see something was coming towards Jody, but not how it would play out. She suspected this was because humans had to make choices for themselves, which tended to flip any preconceived future upside-down.

Also, she found it hard to always stay close; time stretched different for Zee than it did for the humans on earth. Yet, she didn't want to leave for long. I dare not miss helping Jennifer and Jody when they need me. She could see that events were on a down hill-slide right now, already leaning towards potential tragedy.

Of course, Mr. Smith must understand all of it. Surly, he will step in when needed. He knows how to do so without dangerously disturbing the balance of time and space. Zee wondered if he too played a waiting game while certain events rolled past, or could he foresee the outcome? No, even he could not be positive; after all, life is a rolling ball without certain direction. Yet, the final act must surly be his. She was beginning to understand that however the final drama played out, it wasn't in her preview to know.

Chapter 7

Jody thought the worlds he found on his computer were awesome. Imagine missing this information for seventeen years, seventeen and a half, he corrected himself. The depth of view of the earth enthralled him as the finger mouse zoomed in and searched the continents for specific cities or towns. It was an exercise in geography that he taught himself each day, one of his self-made lessons that increased his general knowledge of the world he lived in, a world that, not long ago, he could only imagine from the voices on a radio. The whole world was new to him. Sometimes, he felt like a newborn baby, needing a million lessons, but ashamed to admit it to others. He'd noticed how everyone took certain knowledge for granted; then, they assumed everyone else knew what they were talking about. He didn't, so had to start from scratch.

He remembered how much he hated that blaring radio, but, besides Jen and Zee, it had been his only link to the outside world. He thought that if he hadn't had that small outside link he might now be a true idiot, unable to think or learn. He shuddered at such a thought and refused to continue with it. The most reverent love in his life was the act of learning, and anything less than full submersion in those studies now would be a true hell. A hell worse even than laying on his backside day after day, blind, neglected, and shoved into the farthest corner. Besides the books that Zee had read to him, he had read a number of good books himself after he learned to read during his hospital stay. Now that the world is opened up for me, I can never go back into the darkness, a darkness where only Zee and Jen had dared to aim a searchlight.

Jen seems to be always in the light. Jody smiled. Of course I'll buy Zee's house for her.

This much reverie was unusual for him because it took him away from his studies, but today his mind kept wandering back to his memories of Zee and his visits to her home before he began going into the hospital every day for the experimental treatments. Why did he stop visiting? Not enough time, or had he been too wrapped up in the doctors?

The feeling of anticipation when Jen pushed him down the street to her house was a memory he would not forget, nor how Zee carried him up the stairs and sat him on her couch propped up with pillows. There she handed him books. So many books he could never have realized existed before.

"Which one do you want me to read first?" she'd ask, "Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, The Grapes of Wrath, The Encyclopedia of Religion, The Complete Book of Modern Poetry, Uncle Tom's Cabin? Or..."

On that first visit, he'd been so excited to hear the titles of all those books he couldn't hardly blink his agreement. His eyes were full of tears and he had to keep blinking over and over because he couldn't speak to tell her that he wanted to hear all of them. She understood his need though, he remembered her laugh.

"Oh, you love it, I know you do, Jody, I understand, I really do. You want me to read them all, every one of them. Don't you?"

His eyes had blinked faster and faster with tears of joy.

Jennifer had been jumping up and down on the couch and almost toppled him over with her own excitement. "Oh, I can tell Jody is so excited and happy." He could remember her saying, "Please start reading quick. He is so happy."

“Yes, of course, let’s see. We’ll touch on poetry first. How is that? Start with a small poem by Shakespeare. By the way, he almost invented the English language single handedly. We still use many of his phrases. Don’t worry, I have a book on that too. Next we’ll read fiction, fantasy and fairy tales and...”

He remembered her taking a soft towel and drying his tears before she began reading. She gave Jennifer a new book every week to take home and read to him because he couldn’t always come to her home to visit. She came to his home almost every day to read to him; that is, until his father came in that one night.

Suddenly, Jody had to stop the memories. He tried to throw his mind back into his geography study. Don't want to remember our little dog, Peewee, and how he didn't come inside or bark or cry at the door, ever again. Jody gulped down the memory as best he could. But nothing for as long as he lived would ever erase Jen's scream at the sight of Peewee's blood. Lucian did it to stop Zee. My own father didn't want me to read. Jody shook his head. Then what does he want from me? I am supposed to be a genius, that’s what Dr. Avers said one day, so why can't I decipher what Lucian wants?

Chapter 8

Jennifer thought she had never been happier. This was the day, no, this is the next minute when I am finally going to live in Zee's house. I wonder if I will always think of it as Zee's house. Oh, I don't care, I just want to get there. She gave her Uncle Louie's arm a squeeze as he turned on to Farnsworth. She sat up straighter and looked out the window. There, looking out the driver's side window she could see her old house slide past. It was falling down for real now, fire had consumed the roof and two sides. All that remained was black sticks sticking up into the sky, barely holding together.

"City's gonna tare it down soon, I reckon, or it'll fall down." She heard her mother say from the back seat. She often forgot that her mother had shared the bad memories too. She never spoke about them to Jennifer or Jody. Her mother was reformed now, but she was still quiet and kept to herself except for Baby John. Little John now, she corrected herself. She thought Uncle Louie had slowed down just a little bit as they drove past the old rented house, but it didn't take a second to put it and its horrible memories behind them as they drove further up the street to Zee's house. No, my new house.

It was somewhat different than she remembered because the porch steps were newer. Had to be, there was a new built ramp off to the side. One in back for Jody too. His room would be downstairs in the new addition.

Jennifer jumped out of the car as soon as it stopped and ran up to Jody. He had rode with Dr. Avers in the van and was waiting for her on the sidewalk.

The first thing Jennifer noticed was that the front porch where Zee had died had been changed drastically by the need for Jody's ramp. Good. Finally, it was time to see the inside of the house and they entered through the front door with Jody leading the way over the threshold.

This time it was Jody who kept up the chatter as he talked about his plans to fix up their new house. Then he whispered low to Jen, as much as his computer would allow, "But I left most of it the same, just like you remember. We even have the old couch and all the books. I insisted that everything stay in it for you."

Jennifer was surprised as she stood and turned to survey Zee's house. It was almost the same. There was the dining room table and the bookcase just as she remembered and the kitchen. Jennifer ran through the kitchen, now painted in bright fall colors, and to the back porch. Yes this was changed too because of the ramp, but the back yard looked good. Then she ran back to Jody.

"Where's your room?" she asked.

Come on, I'll show you. He led her to the side room, now a small hall, where Zee used to keep her paintings and bookcases. "See right through here. I have my own bath, my own door, and a wide ramp into the room. I have a ramp to the back yard too."

"I saw it from the porch, nice."

"Uncle Louie said he'd have the yard re-done in a pro... a privacy fence. Jody had been about to say protective fence but why bring up memories on such a swell day. He continued, "Except for the addition, it was real cheap, almost free, even with the furniture. The family just wanted to get rid of it. They all live out in the suburbs and didn't want it."

They heard Uncle Louie coming back down the stairs with Little John.

"I thought of putting a small elevator in, but it would have been too expensive. Not worth it. Jody doesn't need to go upstairs anyway. Everything he needs is down stairs" Uncle Louie said.

"Hey, young lady, aren't you going to go upstairs and see how we fixed up a nice bedroom for you?" Uncle Louie asked. He winked, "I think you'll like it."

Jen ran up stairs calling out, which one is mine. Her mother was sitting on the bed across from the bathroom pulling cloths out of a box so she guessed the other one was hers, and ran to it. "Oh, its beautiful, It really is.

She stood in the middle of the small cozy room. The window faced the street and had pink blinds on it. Her whole room was pink, her favorite color. Flowered pink and green wallpaper was on the walls and a pink bedspread. A long mirror was on the wall with the slanted ceiling. She didn't have a real closet like in the apartment but she noticed that Uncle Louie had built her a corner one with a curtain. It looked cute with the ruffles.

She plopped onto her new bed and absorbed the new room with pleasure. Her whole world had suddenly turned into one, big ball of happiness. Maybe it was the ugliness of her life up till then that made it seem so wonderful, but Jennifer didn't care.

"It is sooo wonderful." She said out loud into the room.

Happiness should be shouted to the whole world. I should open the window and shout. She didn't; instead, she sat and closed her eyes and breathed in the pink air of her new, first time in her life, real own bedroom.

She heard her mother go downstairs and thank Uncle Louie for all he'd done. She guessed she'd better join everyone and do a little thanking too. As she left she closed her door to keep Little John out. It's my room, all mine. then she had a wispy thought that maybe they could get a little fluffy dog. Oh no, she cringed at the thought. No dogs, not after Peewee. Maybe a cat? No nothing.

Lucian thought it was interesting that he had just turned himself into a young man slightly older than Jody. Took a lot of energy, but not as much as it did to become that fat nurse. He rather liked his new look. Slim and broad across the shoulders, smooth skin and large lips. He wondered if the lips had over done the look. He concentrated his mind on the cells that made up the lips and reduced them. Now my face looks like a million other guys, which is what I want. He'd decided that becoming an adult male slightly older than Jody would gain him respect.

He chuckled to himself when he thought about how he could grow backwards in physic, but keep his mind sharp. Millions of people would give anything to be able to do the same. No matter, Lucian didn't need cash. He could get all he wanted, any time he wanted just by hypnotizing a bank teller into leaving the window. He didn't because his real business was setting Jody up to help with the Entity. Damn, I look good young. Think I'll keep it.

He remembered once he was a retired Major in the Prussian Army just before WWII. A tottering old dude, barley able to hold up his head. But age has its compensations. He had used a golden cane and when he rapped it on the floor, everyone in the grand hall stood up at attention. Lucian chuckled.

Well, the fun was over. Work to do. For a few short years it had been fun playing an old man. Now he had shrunk down so far he was almost a child. Actually, he preferred his true regal figure best, the tall, suave Lucian, but that wouldn't work for Jody. He had to keep Jody off balance, at least for a while, until they could do the job.

He ran through his many hundreds of years memory and couldn't recall ever being this young before. What's next, a baby, he laughed his grating laugh as he took pleasure in himself. Oh the human race is so stupid. They only see what they expect to see. It never occurs to any of them that the person in front of them might not be real. Even the investigative services of most nations have been blown away and confounded by my antics and still they refuse to look below the surface. Blind dolts, all of them.

Lucian looked at himself in the mirror and pulled his shirt out further from his pants. The way kids are wearing pants these days, ought to be a law. His jeans were falling down almost off his hips and of course his huge tennis shoes were untied. His last item of teenage hood was the earring. He had debated whether to stay white skinned or not, after all Jody was white even if his sister and brother were a mix. But he decided that dark would work better for the role he was about to play. Yes, a grudge against humanity would not hurt his image one bit. Something to share with my son. My son who is half human so not as physically agile as his old man. Lucian laughed at his own joke.

Chapter 9

Dr. Avers parked in his reserved parking space in the Jefferson garage at the Boulevard Hospital. It was a new parking garage and he felt pleased, at his age, to still be around during the re-structuring process. It was an old hospital and needed the modern face lift. For more years than he wanted to count, he had walked his rounds in the old section; now that I am leaving, they fix it. He smiled at that. Will I still have a parking spot after I am fully retired? A perk for an old man?

Oh, well, he sighed, this hospital had treated me well during my stay. He still had a small office where he saw patients once a week. He had cut back until he only need take care of patients who had been with him a long time. No new ones, except Jody. His secretary was one of his old patients too and this worked out well for both of them. I have time to work on Jody's mysterious doctors.

He took the elevator up towards the new Prosthetics section on the second floor. His appointment with the hospital administrator, Mrs. Holloway, was for 10 am, and he didn't want to keep her longer than necessary. He knew how busy she would be even with the flu season over. Summer brought on ear infections from every child in Michigan, it would seem to her. He preferred eyes himself, and chuckled.

He walked past the nursing station to Mrs. Holloway's office. Her door was opened and she must have been waiting for him because she motioned for him to enter. He reached over and shook her hand before he sat down.

"Oh, Dr. Avers, it's so nice to see you. We don't see much of you any more."

"Ah, the pain of simi-retirement, too much time to fish and play golf."

They both laughed at the irony in the joke. She knew as well as he did that his dedication kept him off the golf course most of the time.

"Well, doctor I am glad you are in a good mood because I am sorry to report that I haven't been able to find any records for you. And I mean that I truly put myself into your request. I've searched Opts. of course, but I also made a through search of the main computer."

Dr. Avers became more attentive, waiting for information he was sure would follow.

Mrs. Holloway continued. "Everyone, admitted to the hospital or not, gets into that one. But I found no information. I specifically checked the records in Prosthetics, all the scheduled ops for the last two years and anything else I could find. Nothing."

At the look of disbelief on Dr. Avers face she threw up her hands in a gesture of resignation.

For his part, he was totally bowled over. He didn't expect her search to come up with zero. His own awkward search the month before was another matter; he was hardly an expert at hospital records, but Mrs. Holloway was. He knew her to be proficient and expert at any task, and also discrete when needed. If anyone could find something in this hospital it would be her.

"Damn., I didn't expect this. Do you mean that a young man in a wheel chair could go through this hospital every day for a half of year and leave no record? Do you realize that he was operated on right here and spent his recovery time facing this same courtyard? Jody told me that during a visit. No one can hide operations of such magnitude. A record must be here someplace. It must."

"Well, if it is, I can't find it."

"Didn't mean to be rough. Just hard to believe, that's all. Did you try the pharmacy?"

Dr. Avers, our main computer covers every section of this hospital. Naturally, because of security reasons, few people can get at the total records in the main computer. I can, and I tell you there is nothing there that refers to any Jody with a mother's maiden name of Boyd in this hospital. I even checked all Jody's, J's, Judd's. Very few Jody's in there, I can tell you. His case doesn't exist. No one has ever received two corneas and two retina operations at the same time, nor received experimental enhancements. But you already know that, doctor."

The dismay and unbelief rose Dr. Avers from his chair and he began to pace back and forth in the tiny office. He stopped and turned leaning on her desk.

"Do you realize that that young man rolled in here through the front door almost every day? Do you think it likely that an orderly or hospital aid would have noticed him? I know he went into the special wing where their 'supposed' records were misplaced, but he had to get there first."

"Probably a hundred people in wheelchairs roll through those doors every day." Mrs. Holloway said with a frown.

Dr. Avers said, "The excuse is that moving from the old wing into the new somehow got the records misplaced. I don't believe that."

"Neither do I, but I promise you that I checked every scrap of information I could imagine while looking for a valid trail. Nothing. I didn't even find the name of the doctor he mentioned listed in the register. He must have disappeared too, along with Jody's record."

"More than one doctor was involved, I am sure. I'll ask Jody. I intend to get to the bottom of this, make no mistake about it." Dr. Avers realized that his anger was coming out into the open. The look of dismay on Mrs. Holloway's face said it all.

Gentle, mild Dr. Avers showing heated emotion? It was unheard of. She could only shake her head, "I don't know what else to do doctor unless I ask the orderlies and janitorial staff supervisors. Perhaps some one will remember a young man of that description. In fact, I'll call them both right now and have them check with their workers on all shifts.

"Yes, and please let me know as soon as possible."

"Of course. In the mean time, I'll give the new wing a double check. I'll talk to a few of the aids over there. I might check back with you before lunch. Yes, I'll go see if Mrs. Koski can help us.

"Do you want me to go check?"

"No. I'll go myself. I am beginning to get almost as angry at this impossible situation as you are."

"I doubt that," Dr Avers said as he chuckled and patted her hand, "But any help will be appreciated. I know how busy you are."

With that, Mrs. Holloway threw up her hands and lifted her eyes to heaven with a smile. "You've said it, but, it doesn't matter, I'll fit this Jody mystery into my schedule somehow, I promise."

With that, Dr. Avers left to go visit his first patient of the day.

Chapter 10

Jennifer stood next to the dark young man and was amazed at the strength that showed as he lifted Jody's wheelchair out of the mud puddle. The wheel had rolled into a crack and sunk almost to its hub, but now it rose, dripping dirt like chocolate ice cream off a stick.

Looking at him through the drizzle, she didn't see any strain on his face. To him it must be like lifting a piece of paper. And his muscles moved beneath his coat like a cat ready to pounce. For some reason this thrilled and repelled her at the same time. His smile was charming as he stood in front of Jody and gave a little bow or nod. His dark hair was plastered to his head from wetness as she supposed hers was too.

As soon as Jody was safe out of the deep hole he swung his chair around and pointed his head at his right chair rest. Jennifer picked up on his request immediately. She stepped over to him and opened the computer cover so Jody could speak and thank the man. Usually, if it was raining, Jody kept the computer cover closed.

But just as she stepped over to the chair, Ant, Jody's new nurse aid, who had just come out of the store, slid on the mud dropping his six-pack of pop next to the puddle Jody had just been pulled out of. Jen was mud now all up her shorts and top and Ant, still sitting in the puddle looked down at his white pants and made such a forlorn face beneath his shock of orange hair and freckles that Jen began laughing.

Ant shrugged and laughed with her.

Jody's weird laugh joined in the commotion and caused them to laugh more.

"Oh, this is too much." Jen said trying to catch her breath. "Gotta stop."

And finally they did stop laughing and Ant stood up trying to brush off the mud that now caked his cloths. "Guess I'll let the rain clean me off."

Jen went over to Jody's chair and lifted the cover.

"Thanks." Jody spoke. He winced as his grating voice flowed out of the computer. Even after more than a year of using the mechanical voice he felt a stab of displeasure when he heard it. He couldn't seem to get used to it. Still, it still sounded better than his own natural voice, but Dr. Avers promised that would get fixed soon.

"Sure, no trouble at all. Just trying to help."

Jody turned to Ant who was trying to brush off the mud, "What a mess. Sorry."

"Ok, buddy. Got a good laugh out of it, anyway."

"Didn't know it was so deep..." Jody's voice faltered.

"My name's, Rockford," the young man who had lifted the chair out said, "But most people call me Rock."

"This is Jody and my name is Jennifer."

"Hey, don't forget the puddle man. My name is Anthony, but everyone calls me Ant. I work for Jody. And, I think we need to get going. It might downpour again at any minute."

With a look to the sky and a blink at Jennifer, Jody let her know to close up his computer.

"I'll lead the way back to the house" Ant offered, "If we find another deep hole, I'll be the first one in." Just then a bus drove by splashing muddy water onto all of them. "Besides, it don't matter any more" Ant said to the retreating bus.

“Hey, aren’t you my neighbor? I just moved in. Agreed to fix up the house for an uncle for free rent.” Rock said following the small group.

It had started to drizzle harder so Jody nodded to his computer letting Rock know that he couldn’t open it to answer.

Jennifer picked up on the question, suggesting. “Let’s all of us go to our house and get a cup of cocoa? Get out of this rain.” Then she smiled at both young men, “Please?”

Ant and Rock both grinned. “Can’t refuse such a nice girl.” Rock said as they began walking in back of Jody who was rolling his chair at a fast clip. Jody set the pace on their hurry down Farnsworth Street to the house.

“We only just moved in too” Jen told Rock as she pushed Jody up the ramp. “A few months ago. Anthony is Jody’s nurse. He works four hours a day. But I help my brother too when he lets me....”

Back in the house Jody said, “Jen talks constantly, but I love it.”

“Yah, I know what you mean,” Rock said.

“Sit while I fix the hot water for cocoa.” Jen called out from the kitchen.

While Jennifer fixed the hot cocoa she heard Jody, Ant, and Rock talking. Jody talked more slowly because of his need to talk through a computer, but all the boys seemed to have a lot in common. Rock and Ant both liked computers. Rock admitted he didn’t own one. Jennifer listened to their conversation in the dinning room.

“But I am going to college. A computer science major.”

“Wayne State?” Ant asked. “Med school here.”

“I do my studies at home.” Jody struggled the words out of his voice box, “Come and see my computer, it’s in the other room.”

Jennifer knew Jody would feel less awkward showing off his computer. He liked to brag about it.

She felt thrilled to have the young men inside the house talking to Jody. He needs friends. Ant was the new nurse aid, but so far, he acted more of a friend. She saw them both through the doorway standing at Jody’s computer. Ahs and ohs came from them when they saw the set up Jody had in his room. She set their cups of cocoa down on the table Jody’s cup had a straw in it. This enabled him to drink his own liquids. A vast improvement from when he couldn’t hold up his head and needed help even to drink. He still needed help eating because his arms and hands were almost useless, but this was no problem for Jennifer. She loved to help her brother. All her friends were jealous of her because she had a big brother who needed her.

Chapter 11

Jody moved his mouse too much to the left and lost the information he'd been reading. He sat back thinking as the screen saver flipped on, a red white and blue fractal that kept sinking into itself forever. One of his favorites. He used them for background too and had other screen savors that he could change with a slight movement of his finger. One set came from the Hubble Telescope. They tended to pop on while he was working when he pushed the wrong key or mental mouse. His motions could be frustratingly slow and clumsy.

He complained to Uncle Louie one day, "It'll take me forever to get the hang of these finger manipulations."

Uncle Louie then said, "Show me again how you can maneuver the screen with your mind."

Jody did.

"Ok buddy. don't complain to me about using your fingers to me. I don't know anybody else who can work a computer with their thoughts alone."

"Guess so." Jody admitted but secretly he still envied healthy people their ability to work fast at the computer, but decided he'd better not tempt fate by complaining.

"So how's the homework coming?" Uncle Louie had asked.

"Hey, great." Jody showed him the studies he'd been doing lately, half of them on his own without even a professor's request or supervision, but then his uncle got a call and had to leave. Jody liked it when he stopped by, which he did two or three times a week.

I am getting faster and faster all the time on the computer. Just need to be careful I don't hit the wrong key or it'll take me twenty finger strokes to get back where I started.

He could use his telekinesis talent to bypass his finger keys and mental mouse, but he was determined to limit its practice. The mental mouse wasn't based on his telekinesis ability, but on a new technology that Dr. Avers had invented and wanted him to try.

He read everything he could find on the subject of telekinesis, but there wasn't much. It was a talent he hadn't known he had or, at least, the extent of it until Zee's death. Jody believed that he needed to learn to control it, but was afraid of it too. Intermittently, he practiced control, but was very careful to keep his practice hidden.

He'd learned the hard way how damaging mental power could be when Lucian killed Zee using Jody's own mind. Used me as a relay, like I was some kind of thing. Angry now, Jody swore and felt strong hatred for the monster who had given him birth. That too he knew he needed to keep under control. Bottle it up, save it for when I can use it against him. Need to calm down and get back to work. He let his screen saver draw him into a fantasy mode for a few minutes.

After his bout of anger, he felt listless and bored. His mouth gave out a short laugh at the thought of boredom. He could remember when bored was the only life he had, sixteen years of it. Now he was busy all the time and barely took enough time to eat and sleep. He glanced at the clock to see if his new nurse, Ant, was due. No, not for an hour.

The more he learned the more he realized how lacking he was in real life experiences, this doubled his feeling of frustration. How am I supposed to live strapped to a chair forever. Within the last year, he had studied everything he could find about life and society in all the major cultures on earth; yet, he still felt like a dunce in social situations. All the great knowledge from history is slowly becoming mine, but I can't slide through a simple introduction.

The big kink in all this learning is just that it is only knowledge; my brain gets exercise without real, live action. I need to change my situation, but how? How can I live a real life while stuck in this chair? Action was the one area he would never understand, and it was what he longed for, to live a real life like other people. Pinocchio. That's me, the boy who dreams of becoming a real boy?

Frustrated, his finger moved across his secret combination of keys. Suddenly, a beautiful, naked woman popped on to his screen. Her lips moved in silence and her hand moved beneath her big quivering breast. Jody was thrown off his stride by the sudden feeling in his gonads as they squeezed together and a powerful stream of hot nerves ran down his spine. His body tingled. He hadn't prepared himself for such a hot reaction, but at least, this time, he knew what it was he was feeling.

The memory of his first sexual urge came back to him and the pain of it as he lay in the school bed. That had been the first time his mind had tried to explode, did explode in mental power he still didn't understand along with a severe headache. The power part he could control now; and even the headache, but not the urge for sex.

How in the hell will I ever relieve this sexual urge sitting in this stupid little boy body and chair. His frustration and agony rose to fever pitch just thinking about it. Not only was he a mental genius but his body was unusual too. He'd read about body growth and secondary sexual characteristics, or their lack, and he was surprised that he had any feeling at all. But he did and there was no relief, none.

It helped somewhat to realize that a lot of young boys shared this same urge without relief, it saved his ego but what about five years from now, ten? At least other boys had a future. What kind of future do I have? I will be sexless forever. No women will ever want a man in a chair.

Sexual frustration was a problem that kept recurring over and over in his mind of late. Perhaps it was because he was overcoming the lack of knowledge from his early depravity and this was where he needed to go next. He needed to jump right into life, but how? Again he felt irritated. His degree of frustration picked up in pace. As quick as he could he pushed his fingers to banish the nude female from the screen. The rush got him twisted up and he turned the computer off by mistake.

He gave in to fate and sat thinking. What do other young men do? He knew he was hitting his head against his weakest point; he not only was inexperienced, but felt ashamed to talk about it.

I guess I could try to ask Ant, or maybe Rock. Don't know them well enough yet, better to stay smooth and low-key right now. Don't want to rock the boat. Or loose my only friends, he whispered to himself as he flipped the computer back on.

His mind kept on trucking, in spite of the need to get rid of the sexual thoughts. Uncle Louie, maybe that's who I should talk to about this. He is so hard and tough. Nah, can't talk to Uncle Louie about something like this. Maybe Dr. Avers? Shouldn't a doctor know how to get rid of a silly urge. He turned his computer back on, time for math.

Chapter 12

Jody was startled at Rock's call. It was a weekday and he still had reading to do, but he'd set that aside for a friend. Ant was out of college during a break, so Rock must be too. Jody began to close the history book with his mechanical stand, but got impatient at its stupid slowness. He concentrated his mind into a narrow beam of thought then slammed the book shut and lifted it off the stand, setting it down on the floor next to his chair with the rest of the books. Books were still the best way to gather in depth information rather than the web. He felt a slight qualm at his act, but shrugged it off, it would have taken ten minutes if he'd used the mechanical arm.

A few minutes later, he could hear Rock's voice talking to someone as he came up on the porch. Must be Ant. Rock and Ant came into his room together.

"Ah, my faithful aid returns. Just in time too." Jody joked.

"I am always on time."

"Good thing, that way I know who is turning the key in the lock."

"Maybe you should give me a key too, in case of an emergency," Rock suggested.

"I can get here quicker than Ant."

"Maybe."

"Hey, ain't no emergencies going to happen here." Ant said. "Right"

Jody felt a swell of pride at his two friends. Ant was his nurse aid but had become a close friend just like Rock. He'd never had a friend before except Zee and she had been an elderly neighbor lady, hardly in his own peer group. He was the youngest of the group, and most dumb about the world, but as Dr. Avers said once, far beyond my age in intelligence. An interesting comment because most of his abilities he still kept from Dr. Avers, and his Uncle Louie.

His momentary reverie was interrupted by Rock's voice.

"How did you get that heavy encyclopedia down from the shelf? "

"Must have been Jen," Jody answered. He was amazed that the sound of his voice no longer bothered him when he was talking with his two friends.

"Jen couldn't handle that tome. Didn't I put that up there yesterday?" Rock said as he picked it up and put it back on the shelf.

"Heavy even for me," he added.

"Then Ant must have." Jody said.

"Hey, I ain't been around for two days, remember? Besides, "Ant said as he looked at Rock, "Jody's mom got it down for him, dummy."

"His mom's so weak she can't hardly lift her own plate."

"Good point." Ant agreed.

"I think Jody moved it all by himself. Ha. With his superior mind." Rock said.

"That's dumb, and impolite too. No one could move a heavy tome like that with only their mind."

"So, how'd you do it Jody. Come on. Tell us. Did you use a stick and make it fall." Rock taunted. "No you can't do that either."

Jody answered then, "For your information there are people in Russia who can move things with their minds. I read about an elderly lady, who could move very heavy things. And a lot of people could move small things if they put their minds to work."

"Like in that movie where the man has a tumor that grows but his mind becomes superior to everyone." Ant agreed.

"I saw that movie too, John Travolta starred in it." Rock said. "Can't remember the name of the movie."

"*Phenomena*, that was its name." Ant said.

"I didn't see it, but I don't watch TV, too much studying to do." Jody decided he needed to change the subject. "I've never been to a real movie house. Could you take me one day, Ant?"

"Sure."

But Rock was still into the movie.

"Didn't he move stuff with his mind? Wasn't it a true story? What do you think of that Jody?"

"I think I'll rent the movie." Jody said to end the subject, but it didn't drop.

"I'd love to have a friend who could do stuff like...like what's his name, Geller or something." Rock said.

"Lot of people said he was a fake, but he wasn't. He really could bend spoons with his mind." Jody said, "I read up on him."

"No it's a trick. I don't believe it." said Ant

"It's easy." Jody said.

"No it isn't, Have you ever seen it done, Ant. See Ant hasn't seen it either. No one can bend a spoon with their thoughts alone. Not even a piece of paper."

"A piece of paper would be easy," said Jody.

"Ah, come on, try it."

"Don't want to."

"Because you can't."

"Yes, I can."

"Prove it."

"I can show you."

"You don't need to," Ant said.

"But I want to. Just a little piece of paper."

Both boys looked amazed as Jody suddenly lifted a piece of , 8 ½ x 11 out of the printer and floated it up in the air.

Rock laughed, "Oh, this is fun."

Encouraged, Jody attacked a stack of papers resting on the shelf near the printer and floated them into the middle of the room as if blown by a strong breeze. The sheets of white paper swirled in the upper air, turning circles until they dropped like fallen leaves to the ground.

Rock yelled, "Hey, bro, that was great. Do it again."

"That was really something," admitted Ant.

"Come on, do it again." Rock taunted, "Bet you can't."

By now Jody was shocked at what he'd done. Showing off, stupid. He tried to correct his mistake. "Can't. Weak from so much effort." The sounds of Jody's heavy breathing filled the room like the papers had. "Need to lay down."

"Just a freak wind?" Rock said, "You didn't lift paper?"

"You're right, I can't" Jody said suddenly. "It was a trick."

"Guess you're tired." Rock looked angry like he wanted to argue, to make Jody do it again, but didn't. He stood glum and dark with his back leaning on Jody's dresser.

Suddenly, they all heard the crash of plaster as the small statue of Mary smashed to the floor. Ant and Jody looked to where Rock was standing. The statue of Mary had been on Jody's dresser. Now fallen, it was nothing but a hundred bits of small white pieces except Mary's blue veiled head which had rolled off to the side.

"Sorry," Rock said, "I must have brushed up against it."

"It's Ok," Jody turned his head towards Ant as a hint he wanted to rest.

Rock didn't want to let the subject go. "Hey, show me that trick again." Rock pleaded. "I never seen anything like that before."

"I am too tired." Jody said.

"Guess it would make anyone tired to use your mind like that," Ant said. "You can show us some other time, ok?"

"Yah, I need to rest now. Do you mind?" By now Jody truly was feeling tired and wore out. His attempt at social one-up-man-ship had set enough fear in him to make him shake. How could I have been so stupid. Socializing is harder to do than studying calculus. I'll never get it right.

"Bed's ready."

"No, I'll rest in my chair, but I need quiet for a while."

"If I know you, your going to sit there and study and call it rest." Ant said. "Let me put you on the bed. I am scheduled be here for another hour; I can get you up before I leave."

"No, I am ok, I just want to rest in the chair."

"Sure, sure. But I am going to make sure you don't study." Ant told Jody as he began to collect the dirty dishes in the room.

"Ok, I know when I am not wanted." Rock said. As he turned to leave he called out, "I'll remember you promised to do that trick next time."

Jody didn't reply to his exit because he had already closed his eyes and drifted away into his own inner thoughts of shame and guilt.

As Jennifer came up on the porch, she could hear the boys conversation as background noise when the front door stood open and her mother stepped out holding John's hand.

"Going to the store, Jen, gotta get some smokes" said her mom and looked down at John, "An a pop for John. Wanna come?"

"No, I have a lot of homework. Test Friday."

She went upstairs to gather up her books and papers, then came back down to the kitchen to study. Its bright, sun lit colors would keep her awake, more than her bedroom. She threw her heavy book bag down on the kitchen table pulled out her book, determined to study, no matter what. She did study for five minutes, but the words started blurring on the page.

The sleepless nights are getting to me. Same dream, over and over. Never mind, she sighed, just take a brake, get a glass of milk, maybe even a few cookies. When she lifted the milk carton out of the refrigerator it was empty. She slammed the door shut and threw the carton into the trash. What stupid jerk would put an empty milk carton back on

the shelf? Now someone would need to go back to the store. Must have been Rock or Ant. Jody couldn't do it. Unless?

Jennifer stood in the kitchen afraid to ask the next question. Is mom drinking again? I haven't noticed anything and she looked fine when she left with Little John. She admitted she felt extraordinarily upset today, and her mood wouldn't let it pass. She walked into the living room to tell Rock or Ant a thing or two about putting empty milk cartons back inside the refrigerator.

She walked through the living room and was about to enter the small entranceway leading to Jody's bedroom when she stopped puzzled. Rock looked angry enough to hit something.

Jody was talking to Ant who seemed upset too. Rock seemed restless and was pacing the floor. He hadn't raised his voice, but still Jen could tell he was overly upset about something. Maybe Jody would have raised his voice if he could have, but his computer prevented it. A juicy argument. She wanted to get in on it. But the boys often shoved her away from their 'boy talk.'

She slipped back a step about to leave when she saw Rock stand near Jody's dresser. His hand was idly fingering the small plaster statue of Mary that Jen had given Jody when he was in the hospital. She watched as Rock's hand flipped the statue first one way then another behind his back. Now he was squeezing it over and over inside his hand. She could see his muscles bulge and the strain in his arm. His vein was pulsing in anger. She wanted to yell at him and tell him to stop or you'll break it.

Then she heard Rock say, "Guess you're tired." And watched his face smile but his hand didn't smile. She became suddenly afraid and stood transfixed with puzzlement. Her hand automatically went up to the cross hanging from her neck, idly rubbing it and polishing it between her fingers. It seemed to her that steam was building up inside of Rock, as if his emotions were becoming uncontrollable. She watched fascinated.

A second later she heard a small snap, then crash. The head of the statue had snapped off just before it crashed to the floor. If she hadn't been looking right at Rock she wouldn't have known the head snapped off first, before the statue fell.

As soon as it fell, Rock said, "Sorry, I must have brushed up against it."

"It's Ok," Jody turned his head towards Ant.

The reverberations of the statue's tinny head snapping off kept sounding inside Jennifer's head making her dizzy.

What happened? Why did he lie? She wanted to leave quickly, but hesitated a moment, thinking. For some reason, Rock's behavior reminded her of Lucian and his hatefulness during her capture. Hatred was what she felt for him too; but later, after he killed Zee, the most she could feel against him was a great numbness. That was good because she didn't want to feel hate for Jody's father. Clean was how she wanted to feel, like Zee was. I want to feel good inside. Zee used to make me feel good and suddenly the memory made her feel sad again.

I'll try to like Rock. But could he be dangerous? If I knew what they were arguing about then maybe I'd know why he got angry. She remembered the anger that had went on in her own home for months after Jody's operation and his anger at everyone. It had been so potent and hurtful. But it is ok now, because Jody had promised her he'd never ever use that stupid mental power again. And he'd promised Mr. Smith too. "Don't ever Jody, you promised me, don't ever," she whispered.

That was when she heard Rock mention a trick Jody promised to show them again as he started to turn towards the entrance. Jennifer ran quickly back into the kitchen so she wouldn't be seen.

Later that night, Jennifer lay in bed tossing and turning; she couldn't seem to get a good night's sleep anymore. This was the third time this week. Tonight she had a reason; she had been troubled by the sight of Rock's anger. His anger got mixed up with her fear of Lucian. And the darn covers kept clumping up around her legs. She got up and re-made her bed. Might be what is keeping me awake. But she knew it wasn't, she knew it had something to do with Jody's friends. She was afraid for some deep reason that she couldn't pin down. Or maybe I can, like Jody showing off.

When she finally drifted off to asleep, she felt herself in a half waking dream. Someone was calling her name.

"Jennifer, J e n n i f e r"

She groaned and tossed her head back and forth but still the voice kept calling her name. Groggy, in a half stupor, she began to listen. It was a gentile voice that was whispering to her, over and over.

"Jennifer...careful...Jody."

She groaned and shook her head, then rose into a sitting position in the middle of the bed. She stared at the blank, shadowed wall.

The voice said. "Watch."

She blinked as the air between herself and the wall coalesced into a shimmering image. A female form, an older woman who looked familiar somehow, like a favorite person, if she had had one. Then it all dissolved into a wide smile and star light eyes.

Suddenly, Jennifer was wide-awake. Was that Zee? In my dream. She had been moving her mouth as if to speak. Jen, still sitting up, felt amazed at what she'd seen, but sad too because she couldn't remember any words. Still very sleepy, she sighed and lay back down. When her head relaxed again on the pillow she thought she heard the words, "Careful of ..."

"I can't hear you," she said into the dark room.

"I'll...close ...very close."

"Yes, please stay close." Jennifer mumbled and dropped of into a deep, restful slumber.

Chapter 13

Jen skipped along and jumped over each crack on the sidewalk on the way to church.

“See how much fun it can be just going to church?” she called to the group trudging behind her.

This early on a Sunday neither of Jody’s friends answered or laughed at her antics. They walked stately behind Jody’s chair.

Lucian laughed but only to himself. He allowed no emotion to show on his face. He had to keep his appearance up. He suspected that he knew why Jennifer had made the challenge about church and this made him chuckle a grating laugh within himself. She thought a bad person couldn’t stand being inside a church. How naive and trite of her. She was young after all, wasn’t even a teen yet, or was she?

Odd she could think so aptly, she had been almost as excluded and depraved as Jody during most of her life. They were both such easy pickings it almost made him decide to give up for want of challenge. But no, need Jody’s mind. Will need his cooperation for the job I need to do for the Entity. Lucian kept his face stony and held a frown on it as he followed Jody and Jennifer down the sidewalk.

Don’t know but I am beginning to think that his sister might be some kind of prize too. A ripe, fertile prize. He was amazed at himself for finding her childish antics enticing. Guess it’s been a while since I’ve been near nice, young flesh full of energy.

As if picking up on the thought of energy, Jody said, “What if I run out of juice, how would I get back home.”

It threw Lucian off his stride for just a moment until he realized that Jody meant the electricity in his battery. He didn’t think Jody could read his mind. He kept his outer mind blank at all times just in case. Odd thought that he might have slipped up just now, out of character somehow. No, I never make mistakes.

Jennifer stopped and twirled as she turned to face Jody and the two boys. “Don’t be silly Jody, Rock and Ant could push your chair for miles. Even I could.”

Jody just frowned. He had also been tricked into joining Jennifer for church. He even knew how she had set the game up to win. What a girl. Actually, he’d never been to a real church before and thought it might be interesting, but he didn’t want to admit this to his new friends so he kept his excitement down.

It was going to be embarrassing if the church didn’t have a ramp for the stairs. A lot of these old churches didn’t, did they? He didn’t know because he’d only seen them from a distance from a car window.

Ant said, “Hey, don’t worry. I’ll get you back home.”

“I could carry you on my back from here to China if I needed to,” Rock added. “You don’t just look like a little kid, you weigh like one too.”

Ant gave Jody a light punch in the arm, and joked “We might as well make a game out of losing the game. He laughed and Jody laughed with him. Rock didn’t seem to think it was as funny.

Jennifer was relieved that the tension was finally broken. It wouldn't do much good to bring them all to church in an angry mood.

Soon they turned the corner and faced the front of the huge church. St Hyacinth's Roman Catholic Church, read the inlaid, plaque in the door. Jody was impressed with the number of stairs that rose up to the huge, heavy doors. He didn't see a ramp.

Ant said "I've been around here before. I think the ramp is on the other side. But we can go up here. I'll carry Jody up, Rock can carry the chair, and Jen can carry her pretty self." He gave a big grin that seemed to delight Jennifer and she skipped up ahead of the boys.

"Your a natural flirt, Jennifer," Ant called to her as he lifted Jody up into his arms.

Jody knew he was small in size and that he could easily be carried, but that didn't solve his embarrassment problem. He thought he'd learned to shrug that off long ago, but at times like this it could still sting. Rock seem a natural to carry the chair with its heavy battery up the stone stairs.

Finally, past the entrance hall with its huge doors, then inside the vestibule, Jody couldn't contain his excitement as he was set back down into his chair and able to roll himself down the middle isle. He felt like a little kid rolling into a palace or hall of splendor.

The bright, candle lit, marble alter seemed a worthy prize, set as it was far down the long isle. Jody rolled towards it, letting the pews recede side-by-side as he slowly rolled down the stone floored isle, his motor purring.

The aura of holiness mixed with glitter was awesome to Jody, better than anything Jody could have ever read or seen on the web. He'd never imagined such high, beautiful ceilings, even in the hospital. Candles were lit all around the church which glittered in the gold trim on the columns and ceiling paintings. He had to stop for a moment to stare up at the blue ceiling that he realized right away was supposed to be a figurative image of heaven. Then to the sides and front, statues stood at attention, reminding the faithful of their favorite saints. People sat scattered throughout the church waiting for the service to begin, or a miracle, Jody mused.

What grandeur. Is this where Zee went to church? No wonder she was so holy and good. This place inspires holiness.

He rolled all the way to the front, so amazed, he forgot the entourage of friends and family following until Jennifer nudged him on the arm to stop. It was just too beautiful. He couldn't take his eyes off the little white statues set within the intricate stonework of the alter. But then he lifted his head to look at the blue stained glass windows above it and felt dazzled all over again.

He knew he must check the web and look at more churches. This was an amazing and neglected subject matter for him. One he needed to remedy that right away. Most of the stained glass windows were behind his chair now so beyond his vision's reach, but he intended to roll slowly past them as soon as church was over to get another look.

Jennifer stood at his chair while Ant and Rock slid into the pew, then she slid in last and sat between them. This bothered Jody, somewhat. She seemed too young to be sitting in the middle of these two young men, friends though they might be. For the first time, he wondered if they had another reason for visiting.

His sister Jen was beautiful. Her blond hair glowed in the candle light from the altar and the overhead lamps. The whole atmosphere seemed to fit her perfectly. Just as he imagined it would have fit Zee. Jen wants to be like Zee, Jody realized suddenly. Perhaps I did too once. Can't now; I have a longer road to travel, revenge. He suddenly reminded himself that church was no place to think of Lucian and pushed the thought away.

The priest had just entered so Jody's attention focused once more on the altar and the service. He enjoyed the pomp of priestly robes and altar servers immensely and decided he wanted to come back here with Jen next Sunday. The newness of the mass absorbed inside him as though he were breathing in God for the first time in his life.

This feels holy, like the meditation Zee taught me, he suddenly realized. It struck him as odd that he hadn't understood that before. How could I not? What else have I missed out on from my low-life chair? Haven't meditated for a year. Why not?

He was angry with himself and determined to fill in all the blanks that he had missed during his back-room life, as he called it. Everything, yes, I need to learn everything. Even God and the angels who I'd forgotten after Zee's death, he mused as he once more took note of the priest's sermon.

Jody divided his attention between the delightful décor of the church and the front altar where the priest continued the mass. Before long, Jody noticed that the priest was holding up a golden chalice. Once again he was confronted with his own ignorance; he didn't know what the chalice was for. A good dash of intense religious studies should remedy that. As soon as I get home.

Just then Rock reached around Jen and nudged him as if he were making fun of something, what? Jody looked around, but not for long because he was raptly interested in every single movement and song. He'd need to get rid of his friends for the afternoon. This new investigation into cathedrals was too important. Jody was enraptured by it all.

Lucian could see the rapture shine from Jody's face. Jody was becoming mesmerized by the atmosphere of the church and the service. He dare not let his protégé get caught up in the church's snare. He disliked all churches. If his fists could have crushed every church on earth he would have done so long ago. As it was he couldn't control his hands from forming into fists as he watched Jody's eyes reflect the candlelight and something more. That spirit that had always eluded him, that spirit that fell down from on high, but always avoided him, that spirit that he couldn't grasp and hold, that spirit that tried to burn into his mind like an unquenchable fire, but couldn't.

He had to do something quick but what? He hadn't made plans for this scene or act, it had been thrust on him. He needed to move carefully; yet stop Jody's newborn stirrings of faith. That faith was evident in his wide, staring eyes.

Lucian thought of the numerous times faith had disrupted his plans in the past and his anger threatened to explode. This won't do. I need to do something quick. Crack the altar, smash it to bits, sink it into the ground. He caught himself up, and quickly moved back inside the self-control of a youthful man, but thinking furiously.

He avidly watched the priest go about the hateful business of the mass, waiting for a clue. Disrupt the priest? No, wouldn't put Jody to shame. Then he remembered the statue of Mary that had smashed to the floor in Jody's bedroom.

Ah, that might do it. Statues of angels stood on pedestals around the altar holding candelabras. One was very close to the communion rail that was right in front of where they were sitting. Yes, close enough to Jody to make him blame himself.

But, can I do it? Lucian knew he was extremely good at mental manipulation and hypnotism, but not as capable as Jody when it came to moving objects with his mind, which is why I need him in the first place. Nothing to do, but try.

Lucian gathered up his mental strength and pulled with all his power on the statue of the white angel holding up the huge candelabra. After great effort, he thought he saw the statue quiver. Good.

As Lucian pulled once more at the angel statue, he heard the crunch of plaster, but no one else seemed able to hear the slide of stone against stone. The huge organ was vibrating through the church and this drowned out the sound. Lucian waited a short while and then pulled at the statue once more until it teetered on the edge of its platform.

Not yet, not yet. He wanted to wait until the right moment. Lucian thought that the right moment came when the parishioners were walking up to take communion. Then the priest came towards Jody holding the golden chalice to offer him a wafer. The priest stood in front of Jody with a questioning look.

Just as the priest bent forward to question Jody, Lucian gathered up all his reserve mental power and gave a great push to the statue from behind. He could feel the sweat in his hair from the effort, but it worked. Suddenly the angel rocked on its pedestal and fell crashing face forward against the obsolete communion rail and onto the stone floor. Not too far from where Jody sat wondering if he should take communion from the priest.

The sound of the statue's crash splattered throughout the church, echoing over and over, as if in a hollow tomb. The priest, startled out of his pose almost fell forward, the host slipped out of his hand and hovered in the air...

Jody was jerked out of his reverie by the smash of plaster. All sound and motion stopped for him, holding time captive. The host seemed to Jody to be in stasis between the Priest's startled hand and the stone tiled floor. Hovering. It refused to fall, it floated as if it were incased in invisible plastic in front of him, waiting. Waiting for what? For him to reach out and take it?

The priest stood poised, bent half over the fallen host with his eyes startled and round, one hand gripped the chalice and the other now clutched to his chest. Jody decided to prevent his panic by giving a gentle push to the host. As if a breath of air had entered the church, the wafer floated and settled back into the chalice.

Jennifer had sat back down with her mouth open as did both boys. The whole church gave a gasp of startled fright and one of the ushers ran up and began picking up the pieces one by one and holding them in his hands and then looked around, unsure of what to do with the pieces he had gathered.

The priest finally got himself back together and apologized to the congregation for the sudden accident, motioned for the usher to set the pieces on the side communion rail, and then continued to hand out communion to people after they walked down the aisle, carefully avoiding the plaster powder and broken pieces that littered the right side of the aisle.

Jody's act of sending the host back into the chalice had been a mere reflex of motion with little thought. Now the thoughts came rushing in. He knew it was he who broke the statue. He had been so mesmerized with the church service that he had lost control of himself. It had happened once before when Jennifer was taken by Lucian. He had tore up everything in the house and thrown the tables and iron around until they hit the wall. That time, his mental power had heightened and increased so much, he'd almost killed his own mother in his rage. Had he lost control this time too? From excitement? His mind wavered between guilt and memory. His mother's scream that day as she ran out of the house to hide from his rage began to play inside his head mixing in with the vibrating organ.

Suddenly terrified and ashamed, Jody knew he had to get out of the church, quick. A few people were still walking back from communion, but he pushed past them and down the isle as fast as he could roll.

Past the beautiful stain glass windows that blurred as he rolled past. His mind felt crazy now. He heard his name called over and over but he pushed on, only stopping to avoid running into a returning communion participant. The church no longer held magic for him, only dismay.

Jody was suddenly caught up short at the heavy back doors of the church. They were now closed and presented a solid barrier. His anger and fear rose in pitch at what the doors represented, an oak solid wall blocking his exit.

I need to get out, he screamed within himself, and did.

If he could have balled up his fist and pounded the solid, three inch, dark stained, thick oak door with intricate decorations on it, he would have; instead, he reached out with his mind, turned the long brass handle on the left door, and pulled the massive door open. It banged back against the wall with a thud.

Suddenly an usher in a black suit and pin striped shirt ran up to Jody.

"Can I help you, sir?" the usher kept looking at the door now, wide open shaking his head in puzzlement.

Suddenly, Ant was there beside Jody. "I'll take over, thank you." he told the usher.

But the usher didn't give up so easily, "We have coffee and doughnuts over here if your interested and the bathroom is on the right."

"No, I think not," Ant spoke for Jody and grabbed the handles of his chair. "We are ready to leave now, thank you anyway." He turned Jody around to push out the door backwards and as Jody turned, he could see down the church isle as first Jennifer and then Rock left the front pew and came hurrying to join him. The noise level had risen a few degrees by now as people asked their neighbors what the commotion was all about. The organist was playing and singing in alto voice a loud rendition of praise as Jody felt the cool morning air hit him with relief.

He felt himself being lifted by Ant and carried down the wide church steps. From his slanted viewpoint he could see that Jennifer stood at the top of the church stairs talking to the usher while Rock followed them down the stairs to the sidewalk with his chair. When Ant sat him down in his chair again, Jody quickly turned on his power and rolled his chair away from the church towards home.

Silence walked with them all the way home, even Jennifer was quiet. This was so unusual Jody wondered if she was ashamed of him. Afraid too? Yes, and now I am afraid

as well, afraid I can't control this stupid, mental gift. I thought I'd learned to handle it. Thought I did. He felt perplexed and swam in feelings of inadequacy.

Chapter 14

Zee watched Jody at his computer console. His small head moved slightly as he scanned the screen, his eyes blinking to shift the view. He was getting faster all the time. Now, after the church incident, the poor kid was throwing himself at his studies like a freight train, non-stop. She hadn't foreseen the statue in church, but what could I have done to stop it? Hold it up with my invisible arms?

He needs a long, hug; she bent over and hugged him. Even though you refuse to notice me, your soul does, Jody. It was your soul that saved the host from falling. His small reflexive act pleased her immensely. Jody's strong mental gift was what had pulled her to his side when she first met him. Psychic herself, she had recognized his gift, though she hadn't known the full strength of his mind.

When she first met him, she was sure he could feel her mind as a vague presence. Now, he has closed himself off from all mental communication. Maybe if he knew I was here he would speak to me, but he refuses to contemplate the possibility. My only door to Jody is Jennifer.

Poor Jody. You will get help, I promise.

Next, Zee floated slowly up the stairs, savoring her old home. It was in much better shape than it was when she lived in it. Meyers had paid workers to come in and refurbish the old house which was a hundred years old by now. This area of Detroit had always a working class neighborhood; she suspected that the house, even when new, had never been anything to brag about. But Meyers and done a nice job. Zee liked Jennifer's room. It was cute and cozy.

Jennifer was sitting at a small desk next to the window, idly fingering the small golden cross Zee had once given her. She was gazing out the window watching the leaves fall off the tree. Zee hoped it was because of the fall season and not because the ash borers had got to it. They had already destroyed many of the ash trees in the Wayne County area.

The memory of praying for the tree in front of the house brought a smile to her ghostly lips. During meditation, she imagined those little worms digging tunnels in the tree and she'd snap them off. She had been home the day the city came by and planted it, and had grown to love its beauty and shade. Now Jennifer enjoys the same shade and beauty I did.

Zee floated over to Jennifer. She'd almost gotten through to Jen the other night and would have been more insistent if she known about the church disaster. Jody needs the influence of a good church. It would serve to counter the possible misuse of his mental gift. Zee was determined to get him back in church eventually. Right now, there is a more important warning.

Zee got down close to Jennifer's ear and whispered.

"Jennifer, it is Zee. Need to warn you."

Jennifer didn't hear her words, but Zee didn't expect her to hear on the first try. Any normal person needs to flip reality upside-down if they want to hear words from another dimension, and she is so young. But sometimes that can be a blessing, the young are less stuck into a conventional type of thinking.

This should be a good time to try because Jennifer is alone and seemed in a contemplative move. When she had her friend Angela over they just giggled and talked

and never left a minute go by in silence. Zee smiled at such happy times, but right now, she needed to intrude on Jennifer's reverie.

"Jen." she called. "Jen"

Jennifer lifted her head higher and looked around as if in search of something. She flipped open her school book, but closed it again with a bang. Then sighed.

"Jen, its Zee. I need to warn you."

This time, Jennifer cocked her head sideways, as if listening.

Yes, yes, Zee got so excited she tried to grab on to the back of Jennifer's chair but lost herself and floated up and away. Darn. It took a moment to float back down again and she hoped she didn't loose touch with Jennifer.

"Can you hear me?"

"Zee? Is that you?"

"Yes, be careful of ..."

Suddenly Jennifer's phone rang its silly ring. She picked it up and began talking to her friend Angela.

"You know. I thought I heard Zee calling me just now. Do you believe that?"

"Oh, no. Ah,—yea,— right,— really"

Zee listened as they talked about ghost and then moved on to scary stories they had heard. She realized her attempt to contact Jennifer was over for now. She is so young, let her have all the happiness she can before it happens. Truly, Zee was afraid for Jennifer and Jody because she didn't know how it was going to turn out. Can a warning prevent a tragedy?

Zee reached out and hugged Jennifer around the shoulders. She thought Jennifer startled for a moment before going back to her conversation.

I'll be back, she promised Jennifer. And Mr. Smith will be watching too. "Don't worry," She whispered knowing Jennifer wasn't listening and also knowing she was referring to her own worries. With that thought, Zee left.

Chapter 15

Jody looked up and down the K-Mart isle. He needed help getting a book down. Where is Uncle Louie? He said he'd be right back, but Rock should be close. Ant had been checking out the notebooks in the next isle. From his low position of the chair Jody couldn't see above the isles.

He called out "Anthony, Rock" in as low a voice as he could because he didn't want people in a public place to hear his voice. Nether Ant or Rock answered. Rock had been next to me a minute ago. Damn, I want to see that book. Jody had snapped open his mechanical book rest before calling them because he was so sure one of them would be around.

A stout lady wearing a dark coat with white, streaked hair entered the isle and stood next to him muttering under her breath as she read a few titles. Well, Jody thought, I want that book.

"Miss?" he asked.

Startled the lady turned towards him and he saw that she was middle age with wrinkles beneath her eyes and around her mouth. She wasn't wearing lipstick which gave her face a washed out appearance.

"Hargrove, Sister Hargrove," she said with a large smile. Can I help you?"

"Yes," Jody answered slowly so his words would be distinct, "Could you please get that book down from the shelve and set it on my book reader?"

Sister Hargrove reached up and touched a blue book.

"No, not that one, the other one, next to it. *The Sensual Body*."

She smiled at Jody, reached up to pull the book part way out of the stack, and then lifted her hand off of it as if it had suddenly caught fire.

"There is no way I am going to get a dirty, pornographic sex book down off the shelf for a little boy like you.. It is hardly an appropriate book for your age."

She glared at Jody as if he had suddenly turned into a pile of dirt then walked swiftly away, her heels snapping on the floor.

Jody sat there stunned. He wasn't used to being treated in such a manner which made it easy to forget that other people saw him as a little boy. He wondered if his own face was slowly turning to fire because he felt a swift anger at her for causing him to remember how little and childish he looked. Old biddy, he thought, but didn't say it. Damn it, Ant where are you? Or Uncle Louie or Rock?

Jody was definitely angry now. He glanced up and down the isle and saw that no one was in sight so he gathered his mind to an invisible hand, reached up, and slid the book out of its slot, then floated it down onto his book reader. It opened to a centerfold of a nude female. Jody smiled. A nice anatomy instruction.

Less than a minute later, Jody heard Sister Hargrove's loud voice coming towards him. Too late to put the book back. Oh, well.

"There, see. That little boy has a book on sex and is looking it."

She fumbled on the word sex and looked as if she were in shock as she pointed Jody out to a young, blond lady who walked next to her.

“My church, the Ministry Baptist will not take kindly to a store in our neighborhood that gives sex books to little children. Oh, no, you will hear more about this matter.”

The pretty young lady walking with Sister Hargrove was wearing a badge labeled Store Manager. Slim and short, she looked to be only a teenager herself.

Jody felt frozen in place and knew he'd never been so embarrassed in his life. He would have shrunk smaller if he could have. Just then Uncle Louie stepped into the book isle. As if Jody was a magnet, Meyers, Ant, Sister Hargrove and the manager gathered around Jody in his chair.

Uncle Louie seemed to take in the situation in an instant. He wasn't a detective for nothing. He frowned.

“This boy who you have denounced as a child is a young man of eighteen. If he wants to buy a book on sex, he has every right to do so. In fact, I intend to buy it for him.

He grabbed the book off Jody's book reader and put it into the basket he'd been pushing. But first he read the title out loud, “The Sensual Body: a discourse on the human drive for sexual pleasure and how to have intercourse with the opposite sex.” He read loudly with glee. “Nice.”

Jody felt an inch bigger after Uncle Louie read the title out loud. It wasn't the real title. He was making it up as he went along. Plus I am not eighteen yet, well almost. Jody managed a smile.

“Are there any more sexual books you would like to buy?” he asked Jody. His voice had risen an octave at the word sex. He was almost shouting now.

The store manager apologized, turning pink herself. “Sister Hargrove, I think the matter is closed.”

Sister Hargrove, whose face had seemed to bleach white, could only stammer as she walked away, “I don't believe that man. He is lying.”

Rock came down the isle just then and asked what was the matter with every one.

“Not a damn thing. Uncle Louie said very loud.

He was fuming but got himself under control by pulling something out of his basket.

“Look what the stork brought in, how about a bird feeder for your new house, Jody. You won't mind that, will you?”

Jody was still silent so Uncle Louie kept talking. “See it looks like a house. Real cute. I'll hang it up by the window and you can watch the birds eat and fly around without going outside. Nice idea, right?”

“Yah,” Jody finally answered. “I guess.”

“Well I think its is a great idea. Jen will like it too. I know you don't want any pets, but this would only be wild birds, not real pets, nothing to worry about. Right?”

“Right.” Jody said as he rolled out of the horrible isle and away from the pretty manager. He still felt embarrassed, and he had never shaken off the murder of his dog, Pewee. He couldn't forget him, and refused to replace him with another pet. The thought Pewee made him feel angry again so he rolled faster towards the checkout.

The others followed, but once through the doors and outside in the drizzling rain they saw Sister Hargrove again. She was putting bags into her car.

Jody sent her an angry look and when she dropped a bag near the front tire he thought, I hope you have a flat. "Yah, I hope you get a flat you old witch." He whispered.

Uncle Louie seemed to glare daggers at her too but Rock only looked around puzzled. Jody realized that he hadn't been in on the little charade about the book so he didn't know. Good. It would have aggravated his feelings of inferiority to have Rock witness his embarrassment. Ant had seen it and that was bad enough. Then he laughed to himself when he remembered Uncle Louie's angry face and how he'd yelled the word sex out loud. He felt comforted that he cared. He wondered if Uncle Louie wasn't embarrassed himself about the subject of sex. Maybe, a lot of adults were. No matter, I have the book and my special girly screen saver. Jody smiled and began to feel better.

Pretending ignorance of the event in K-Mart's, Lucian noticed Jody glare at Sister Hargrove as she put her bags in the car and he heard the whisper even though it was very low. He realized he had an opening here just as he'd had in church. Just a little accident will do. He hummed to himself as he helped Jody with the van lift. Sister Hargrove was driving away slowly as many older people do, but Lucian used his mental power to give her foot a small push on the gas pedal. Her car speeded up as it drove out of the parking lot and tried to make a very fast turn. With all his mental might, Lucian sent his mind into the right front tire of her car and stabbed the tire with a sharp imaginary knife. The car didn't quite make the next turn before its right front tire blew out and the car skidded across the lanes.

Too bad that Meyers had already started up the van with the windows closed so none of them heard the screech of tires as Sister Hargrove tried to turn the corner on the rain soaked road, or the crash. If they had been paying attention they might have heard a siren as they drove out of the mall in the other direction. This is good enough to hit the newspaper. Lucian smiled.

It did. The next day Jody thought he'd never smile again. A small news article on his web site announced that a Sister Hargrove had slid off into oncoming traffic and then into a telephone pole just outside the mall. The crash caused her to crack her head on the side window of the car. She was dead when the ambulance arrived. A friend from church said that she never drove fast. It was surmised that she may have had a stroke which caused her foot to fall heavily on the gas pedal.

Jody felt sick inside and his stomach threatened to displace his breakfast. Fear clutched at him as he remembered his thoughts last night against Sister Hargrove. He kept repeating to himself, I didn't do it, did I? I didn't do it? All I did was wish for her to have a flat tire. That's all, just a little wish. But he felt so very afraid. He shivered as if a chill breeze had just blown in from the window.

It didn't help when later that day his Uncle Louie called to talk to him.

"Thought I'd stop over for a visit. I want to talk to you. Did you read about Sister Hargrove in the news? Damn shame. Messy, it was too, what the guys said. Unfortunate. Said the tire looked as if it had a blowout before the car wrapped itself around a telephone pole. Exploded, they said. I am here till five, see you then."

An exploded tire? At the words Jody trembled inside his chair. He would have clutched and wrung his hands in nervous energy if he could have but he couldn't move his arms voluntarily, so they lay in their forever position atop his chair arm rests. He thought of lifting them with his mind and then the horror of using his mental power made him tremble more. What did Uncle Louie know? What does he think he knows? Why is he coming over to talk to me?

Chapter 16

At first Detective Meyers couldn't pin point what his problem had been all day, with his guts fluttering every once in a while and his eyes blinking off and on when he tried to read, but finally he had to admit that he knew where his source of anxiety was coming from. Fear. He was afraid and it was a rare event when he felt fright roll his guts around. The last time he'd been this fearful had been rushing down Farnsworth Street to Zee's home, more than a year ago. His fear had proved true, Zee lay dead in front of her house before he got to it. Is this fear warranted too?

They call me as a hard-nosed detective. I don't feel the clutch of fear easily, but now I think I am more frightened than I have ever been. He almost felt like sobbing. I am a damn good police detective, tough, hard, I don't need to feel a damn thing. Don't need to. But he did and that was his problem; that was where the fear came in.

The car in front suddenly slammed on the brakes at a light and Meyers had to do the same. He swore and hit the dash with his fist. Aught to put on the siren and scare that son-of-a-bitch. He blinked away his anger instead.

"Damn, but I love that kid. His sister Jennifer too. Can't let them go down the drain. I must be wrong. I know I am wrong. Jody didn't do it."

He suddenly realized that he was talking out loud to himself and quit. He'd never gotten married and had no family at all except a few cousins. He'd taken to Jody and Jen like a duck takes to water. He sensed a real need for both of them to have him as a friend.

"And by God that's what I am and intend to remain, their friend." Silently he added, no matter what happened or what Jody might have done.

He remembered Zee laying there on the stairs with her brains exploded and Jody laying on the sidewalk at her feet sobbing. The autopsy has been inconclusive because how in the hell can you conclude an autopsy when the brain had exploded but nothing else? Couldn't even prove a real crime had been committed.

But he knew it had; he'd watched Lucian walk away. No, slink away. He is a snake through and through. Sylvia's throat had twisted beyond its voluntary movement before she hit her head. And our great modern science couldn't figure out how it happened. If it don't fit the science books, it is impossible. Never mind the fact that it did happen. He felt his anger rise and shoved it down again.

He was learning that certain things that can never happen, sometimes did. Oh, yes they did. But Jody didn't do it, he repeated to himself, not Jody.

Jody had been so devastated by Zee's death that he withdrew from the world for months, and only long therapy, his own common sense and a strong will to live had brought him back again. Meyers knew Jody hadn't killed her. He couldn't kill her, he admired and loved her more than he did his own mother. But somehow he had played a part in the tragedy, a part that he refused to talk about. He'd refused to talk much about anything that happened that night. Still wouldn't budge on that score.

"Well, he'll need to talk about it now. I need to know. I'm damn near the closest person to him. I've got to know." He spoke aloud then caught himself again.

He knew that his biggest fear was that there was a murder involved, because Sister Hargrove hadn't just had a stroke like they supposed. With a stroke your foot might hit the pedal but it would roll off again. That car had been going fast enough to damn

near cut the telephone pole, at the exact same time that we left the mall. Learned today that the tire had been ripped apart as if it had exploded. Tires don't explode.

How did she get up to a high speed in such a short a time? The parking lot was almost empty in the direction in which she left, she could have begun speeding up in the parking lot. Something isn't adding up here. Admit it dummy, that's what's got you all tied up in knots.

"He'll have to talk now. I've got to know. Got to help the kid." Damn I am almost his dad, would be if he'd let me, I think. He'll talk to me. It's the only way I can save him, the only way.

He turned the corner on to Farnsworth more savagely than he intended and his wheels skidded around the corner. Ok, slow down fool, pull it together for Jody's sake. Keep your cool. He slowed to a crawl pace until he pulled up in front of Jody's home, the house that once belonged to Zee.

Meyers sat in the car for a long minute before opening the car door and finally stepping out into the evening light beneath the street lamp.

Jody was waiting for him in his computer-bedroom. The one I had had built for him, he reminded himself. Jody's face looked solemn and almost as fearful as Meyers felt. But not too bad if he remembered another time, the time when Jody lay at Zee's feet. Then his eyes had been bleeding, his face cut up and scraped, his body limp and useless. Here and now there was a hundred percent change for the good. Meyers was so proud of his achievement, his ability to not only come around from tragedy but grow and learn from it.

"Hey, Jody." Meyers went up to him and brushed at his hair with his huge, callused hand. Then he gave Jody a squeeze around his shoulders before he spoke again.

"We gotta talk, buddy. You know we got to."

He could see the fear in Jody's eyes which suddenly put a new fear into his own. Amazing how eyes can reveal so much and hide much too.

"Where's Jen?"

"She's at Angela's house. She might be home later. Don't know."

"Good, I want to have a good long talk without interruption this time Jody, a good long one. You understand."

"Yah," Jody nodded.

Meyers was still amazed every time he did that because he had known him when he couldn't nod, or see, or hardly move at all. All Jody been able to do the first time he met him was to listen and think.

"I am going to begin with a statement about Sister Hargrove. She was driving so fast her car wrapped around a telephone pole less than a block from the mall. It is not ordinarily possible to get up to such a speed in such a short distance. Also her right front tire exploded. that's a corker. Tires don't explode. Plus, the medical examiner ruled out stroke. Just a preliminary, but stroke or not, there is still a problem. You understand?" He waited for a long moment, then added, "Certain things are not possible."

Just like exploding brains are impossible, he thought, but didn't say the words out loud. He controlled his voice as he continued.

"The pavement was wet and the rain was falling steady. You remember, don't you?"

“Yah,”

“Now I know you can’t get out of that chair to hurt anyone. What worries me is...Meyers couldn’t go on at this point. He squeezed his eyes shut, opened them and shoved the words out, “D...d...did you do it? I am asking yah cause I gotta know.”

“No. I d..d...don’t know.”

Jody blinked back tears when he answered and Meyers wanted to hold him in his arms and comfort him, but this wasn’t the time. No this isn’t the time. It was hard to be firm with Jody, he looked like such a small, innocent child with his small size and tiny elfin face surrounded by a thatch of black unruly hair. Even his eyes looked big and angelic. But Meyers knew from long experience that looks could easily deceive. No he never let looks determine an outcome, never.

“Explain it to me. What do you mean, ‘I don’t know’?”

“Don’t know”

“It’s got to come out Jody, by God, I have got to know the truth, all of it, whether you want me to or not.” Meyers heard the pleading in his voice and its rise in pitch so he lowered it slightly, but firmly, “That is final.”

Jody could see that it was. The hardness in Uncle Louie’s eyes told him that. Better to just get it over with then. Besides, he had wanted to tell someone for a long time. He needed help understanding it himself. Maybe Uncle Louie could help. Or maybe put me in jail. Jody gathered up his courage and began to speak.

“I did wish it to go flat, but just for a minute, that’s all. Just a stupid wish.” I didn’t do it. I even laughed about what happened in K-Mart later.”

“Most people know that wishing for something doesn’t accomplish it. But Jody, you’re a little different, we both know that. Now tell me how different.”

Jody was quiet for the few minutes it took to gather up his courage. Then he spoke.

“I got this ability to move things with my mind. You know, it’s an extra-sense, like ESP. Officially it’s called telekinesis. Not too many people in the world have it.”

When he saw that Uncle Louie nodded and didn’t seem shocked, he went on.

“I never knew I had it until... Jody stopped for a long breath and then continued.

“It used to cause me trouble cause I couldn’t control it. You remember that time the windows exploded in the handicap school. That was because of me. But I can control that kind of stuff now. I’ve been practicing. I thought I’d never use it again after Zee got killed, but I do sometimes, just a little, but I’d never used it to hurt anyone. Never. Especially not Zee. Or even Sister Hargrove.”

He could hear some of his words run together in the hated machine voice but he didn’t care at this point. It was hard to just get any of it out.

“I know you would have never hurt Zee.” Meyers said, “But what happened that day Jody? You would never talk about it.”

“It was my father, Lucian. He got into my head and pushed at me. He pushed at Zee through me somehow. He can do it too, the mind stuff.”

“Lucian is your father!”

Meyers was quiet for a moment.

“It’s genetic then. You got this ability from your father.”

"I don't think so, or not all of it. He told me it was put into me at gestation. A shot, he said. He has plans and wants something from me, but I don't know what it is. It was him that pushed me to break those windows in school too. He tried to smother me with a pillow."

Meyers had to control his emotions at this point. It took him a moment before he could go on and still sound tough.

"He's a snake, all right. Sorry he's your father."

"Yah."

Oh Jody, Meyers thought, you can't imagine how much I hate him, anyone who is capable of doing that to his own kid is scum. I knew he killed Zee too, yah I knew. Meyers didn't say any of what he was thinking at this point. He was afraid to speak.

When he could get his voice again, he said, "He's not around now, at least, as far as I can find because by God, I intend to get him when ever he does come around. I promise you that."

"But you don't know him like I do," Jody said. "He is capable of long term planning. Both me and Jen know he'll come back. We just don't know when or what he wants from us. But we know he wants something and he will keep trying until he gets it."

"I understand now, I can surmise what happened to the house you were living in then. You did all that damage didn't you, with just your mind?"

Meyers voice softened in admiration, he couldn't help it. It was amazing and totally unbelievable if true, but it also made Jody a suspect in Ms. Hargrove's death. A mind that could throw an iron across the room might be capable of exploding a tire.

"Yah, I did it. I went crazy for a while. Out of my head. Didn't even know I went down to Zee's house until I got there. I still didn't know what kind of power I had back then."

"Now you do?"

"Yah, sort of"

"You talk as if it was years ago. Hell it was just last year."

"But I've been learning a lot since then."

"I know you have son and I am proud of you. But something is going on here and I've got to get to the bottom of it. Are you sure you didn't do it?"

"Almost. I don't think I would laugh and then explode someone's tires. Sure I was angry but only for a minute. I don't hate anyone Uncle Louie, especially an old biddy like Sister Hargrove. She doesn't know any better. And you bought me the book anyway remember?"

Jody looked worried just the same to Meyers. "Listen up Jody, if you say you didn't do it, then I believe you. By the way, is that how you got that book down off the shelf? With your mind?"

Jody shrugged and frowned, "Yah."

Meyers laughed to ease the tension, "By damned, a whole lot of people could wish they had a talent like that, a whole lot."

"I know."

"Better keep it under your hat."

Meyers noticed Jody give him a look like 'stupid,' and laughed out loud. "Ok, ok, I am the slow one here, dah" They both laughed.

"Try not to worry. I intend to find out who else might have been around that night. Maybe Lucian was following us."

He noticed Jody's eyes at the mention of Lucian. Pure hate. He couldn't blame the kid, but he didn't want to see such strong emotion in a young boy like Jody. He promised himself that somehow he'd take that hate away. That he'd become Jody's father, if it comes to that.

"I'll look into things. Gotta help my boy."

He liked the sound of that phrase and knew that Jody liked it too because he smiled. Meyers liked Jody's crooked smile. It changed his whole face.

They heard Jennifer on the porch. She slammed the door open then shut and shrieked when she saw her Uncle Louie.

Meyers and Jody smiled at each other. They both loved Jennifer and that was no joke.

She clapped and ran to Meyers and folded him in her dark, little arms. And then because she was Jen and couldn't ever stop talking or moving, she was off and away again, chattering about school and her friend Angela and...

"Oh, let's have a cocoa party. I'll heat the water." Polly put the kettle on she sang through the house.

So the evening had ended pleasantly Meyers realized as he drove away in his car. And he'd been so afraid earlier. Still there was a touch of fear, something was up. He could feel it. He wasn't a police detective for twenty-five years for nothing. He suspected that Lucian had been nearby. But how did Lucian surmise that Jody was angry with Sister Hargrove?

It has to be him. Who else would or could set Jody up? But how? Is that snake Lucian capable of exploding a tire? Even if the tire had a defect, how could such a thing be possible? Meyers wasn't sure, but Lucian fit into the bad guy image perfectly. If it is him, he must be lurking near by and I'll get him.

He run his memory of that night once again in his mind trying to pick out anything that didn't fit right. Must be something. I'll go back to K-Mart and ask if anyone resembling Lucian was in the area or any weird stranger. Not my case, but a lady is dead, I intend to make it my case.

Zee sat in the seat next to from Meyers and watched his eyes as they followed the other traffic on the road. At times his hands gripped the steering wheel harder and she knew he was finally coming to the idea of Lucian's possible involvement.

She reached over and gave the hard-nosed detective a hug. He ahumphed and she thought that showed improvement. Believing in psychic phenomena was certainly not his forte. She smiled. There is hope for you yet, Mr. tough detective.

She bent over to him and whispered into his ear, "Check Rock."

When Meyers rubbed at his ear, she repeated Rock's name over and over again, alternating it with Lucian's. If he puts the two names together, he'll solve it. Yes, my detective, save Jody and Jennifer for me. Zee kissed his cheek before she left.

It smells like Lucian, but why and how? To get Jody in trouble or damage our relationship? The only people who saw Jody get embarrassed was myself, the Manager,

Mrs. Hargrove, and Ant. Where was Rock during this time? Hadn't he walked in after it was over? He should have heard Ms. Hargrove's voice from isles away, she was speaking so loud. I did come to think of it.

Many people in the store must have heard the shouting. Only Jody showed anger towards Ms. Hargrove. Either Jody was the motive or it was a random accident. Except that tires don't explode. Lucian must be imitating someone, a sheep in wolf's clothing?

Meyers thought of going back to the station to check out mug shots, but decided it was probably useless and might as well wait until morning. If Lucian was in disguise then he'd be hard to spot. Meyers was on a roll with ideas and didn't want to stop the flow. Go home, pull off your shoes, eat and rest. That's the ticket.

On his way up the stairs he kept up the thoughts. I intend to look at everyone around Jody. What would Rock's motive be? He's Jody's best friend. Jody needs a friend. What would Ant's be? He is a good nurse and studying in college. Meyers shook his head, but intended to investigate both young men even though he couldn't imagine how Lucian could disguise himself as a young man. Also get a few officers to ask around in K-Mart, see if we can come up with anything. Roy is probably doing that now, so I'll give him this new info. Keep quiet about Jody though, don't want him in the mix.

Meyers felt as if he were getting a grip on the answer, but with each step forward his suppositions seemed more impossible. Rock seemed like a nice kid, so did Ant. But either one of them could have done it if they had power like Lucian. Wouldn't take much time, hardly any time at all. He wondered if Lucian would need to squint in concentration as he exploded a tire. Wouldn't he need to be still for a short while?

Where was Rock while I was putting Jody and his packages in the car. Don't remember. Can't remember seeing him or Ant. Doesn't mean much. Who is Rock anyway and where did Ant come from. Don't know but I intend to find out.

Chapter 17

Jennifer was sitting on the couch in the living room, copying her math problems into her notebook. She was proud to be in Jr. High School now. It helped her feel as if she were growing away from the memories of last year. Actually, a lot of years, she thought as she couldn't help looking back at the many apartments she had lived in with her mother and her mother's latest boyfriends. She didn't even know who her father was. The family was always moving, trying to skip out on rent.

But her mother's drinking had been her worst experience until Jody's father had jumped back into their lives, then became my nightmare. Even now she could remember his hands on her as he wrapped the tape around her hands and feet. Now I realize that I am lucky he didn't rape me. All he did was kill me.

She laughed at that. Imagine being dead and coming back to life, but that's what happened. Vaguely she could remember Mr. Smith's soft-spoken voice asking her if she wanted to return. She shuddered at the thought of not returning to Jody. Jody needed her. Even now. He acts so grown up in his computer chair, but he's smart in a dumb way.

The notebook page was now filled, but opened in her lap. Still need to work out the problems. I have an English paper due by the end of the week, and here I am daydreaming. She picked up the pen to begin writing but then she thought of her brother Jody who could do so much now, but he would never hold a pen in his fingers or walk into a room. Doctor Avers said Jody was a genius. Right now he was working on a software program that he said no one had ever thought of before. It was his own invention. Smart but dumb.

He was so glad to have real friends that he let them tell him what to do. Jennifer didn't like that. She remembered when she didn't have any friends when they had first moved near Zee. She smiled remembering the comfort she'd felt sitting at Zee's table, sometimes with a cup of tea or bowl of soup. The other kids went to visit to draw or play games, but Zee knew I needed something more, a friend to lean on.

And Jody, oh how he changed after Zee found him. Jen giggled when she remembered Zee seeing Jody for the first time, so little yet so smart. She knew too, right away about Jody's mind, that's why she helped him, helped us all. Oh, I wish she were here to help us now. Jody needs her now.

Jen frowned and looked at her unopened English book, get to work silly. Stop worrying. But she was really worried because she felt evil pushing at them again. It was as if Jody's dad was just around the corner and getting ready to pounce. When she was with Jody and his friends, Rock and Ant, she felt a tingle of fear in her guts. Maybe it wasn't fear, maybe it was something else. Something is wrong but I don't know what. Perhaps it is just that Jody lets them talk him into things.

Just then she felt the tingle for real as she felt Rock came in to the living room where she sat and look over her shoulder. He flipped her hair saying "Hi Brat." She hadn't known he was here, then Ant came into the room and called Rock away. So they had both been here and she had known because she felt that strange tingle.

Ant was laughing as he pulled Rock away from Jennifer “No flirting.” Jen heard him say. Is that why I feel the tingle? She shuddered. But I like Rock, don’t I? I like Ant too?

From the kitchen, Jen heard doors opening and closing and then a short screech of pain. She ran into the kitchen and saw her mother bent over Little John who was bleeding from his forehead and screaming. Mrs. Boyd’s hands fluttered.

“Oh, oh, what can we do.” She looked at Jen.

Disgusted at her mother’s helplessness, Jen grabbed John and a dishtowel at the same time and began wiping at the tiny wound.

“Look, see how small it is? Just a teeny, tiny, bump,” she said to John to make him smile through his tears as she wiped.

“It looked bad, like his head was split open. There’s so much blood.” Mrs. Boyd said but she grabbed another towel and began to wipe the drops of blood off the floor. Then she stood up and took over wiping John’s forehead.

“Who would think such a tiny cut could make the whole kitchen red. Red here and red there and lots of silly red.” she cooed to John till he laughed.

By now Jen had stood up from wringing out the towel and wiping more of the blood off the counter and floor. She watched her mother tease Baby John. She couldn’t help a slight feeling of jealousy as she saw the tenderness in her eyes and watched her mother practically salivate over the baby’s tears and pain. Her mother had changed from being an every day alcoholic who had done nothing but sit at the kitchen table, into a smothering, worn out old lady who was determined to make up for lost time.

She could never completely undo all that she had done or neglected to do. But she was trying. Jen suspected she was trying so hard it would kill her. Even now she was often sickly and couldn’t stay out of bed some days. Perhaps the absence of booze made her weak.

Jen was thankful for one thing, at least, she had taken over the job of raising John. Jen no longer had to rush home from school just to make sure he was safe or feed him or wash his cloths. Well, she often had to do the wash because her mother couldn’t carry heavy loads up and down the stairs to the basement.

Still, Jen was proud of her mother’s attempt at normalcy. She even made homemade bread once in a while and today, real bean soup was cooking in a pot on the stove.

Jen longed for someone she could lean on, but her mother wouldn’t fit the bill. She didn’t dare disturb her mother with her own worries, her mother was too frail now, mentally and physically.

Suddenly, Jen reached over to where her mother sat with little John and wrapped her own skinny, arms around them both and hugged.

“I love you mom. Hey, why don’t we bake cake. We can make it together. What do you say little guy, chocolate or vanilla?”

“Choc-let, choc-let.” He yelled sitting up and bouncing, “Choc-let.” He clapped his hands.

“Chocolate it is then,” Jen said as she pulled out the cake pan. “Brownies.”

The boys, Jody and his friends would enjoy brownies too. She liked pleasing Jody. She thought about it for a minute. Yes, she didn’t mind pleasing his friends too. Sometimes she felt drawn to them in spite of her tingle of fear.

17b

Jody had been using his mouse to manipulate the mathematical fractal image on his screen, taking a break between his physics study class and his own intense search for general information. Lately he had completed his search into China's earliest culture and was moving down his list to the Mongol hoards of the Khans who attacked before the Chinese built the Great Wall of China.

He had realized early on that his common sense knowledge was far behind the average student. Most students learned about China in the fifth grade and here he was at college level and didn't know anything about China. Uncle Louie told him that his study of the history was more intense than most children got in any classroom, but still he felt compelled to make up for every lack he suffered during childhood.

"I intend to make up for every thing I missed while I lay in bed, shut off from the world. I want to know everything, everything." He'd said. He didn't tell Meyers about the church incident, plus he'd decided to hold off checking out cathedrals, for now. Maybe, someday.

He heard the doorbell chime and looked down at the small computer on the arm of his wheel chair, his second brain. Time for Ant. He was always on time. Yes, six pm right on the button. He turned his chair away from the computer as Ant walked into the room.

"Hey, Jode, how are you today."

Jody flipped on his computer to greet Ant. He liked the way Ant's mind worked, Ant was studying college courses too. "Great. Look at these fractals. See this one? I designed the colors that are twisting in the middle. Watch and they will grow as if they are eating the rest of it. Ha. Devoured by a rainbow. That'd be a good name.

"Don't you ever quit?" Ant laughed.

"Quit what?" Jody asked, his pronounced Q had been a little slurred. His latest computer voice had been improved but not enough, never enough. "I am playing."

"Playing? Looks like studying to me, as if that is all there is in the world. You go overboard."

"It is all there is in my world. Besides, I've got to catch up."

"At this rate you'll burn out before you catch up. Hey man, lighten up. No one knows it all."

"I will, and one day, I'll prove it."

"Don't need to prove it to me, it's yourself you're proving it to, just yourself." Ant said as he rolled Jody into the small personal bathroom set into a corner of his bedroom and lifted him on to the toilet. He proceeded to empty out the urine bag, washed it in a light solution of bleach and water, and hung it back onto Jody's chair. He checked the Texas Catheter to assure himself that it was in position then washed Jody up when he was finished and set him back onto his chair.

"Feel better? Ready to dig into the books again, I mean computer. Ha, better than books, isn't it."

"Easer for me, but books go deeper. How about your classes? Ok?"

"Yah, sure. Not as intense as your studies."

They both heard the door chime and Ant asked if he should get it but the door opened and closed shut and Rock's loud voice carried through the light walls to them.

Ant called out, "We're in the bathroom, on our way out now." He rolled Jody into the extra large bedroom that doubled as Jody's computer lab.

As if reading his mind, Jody said, "It is large isn't it. Uncle Louie had it built it for me."

"Just a minute," Ant said. He just realized that Rock hadn't come into the room.

"I'll go get Rock. He might be pestering Jennifer. Mighty Ant to the rescue."

When he came back he was pulling Rock into the room. "She did need rescuing."

"Hey, I was just pulling her hair."

All the boys laughed even Jody, but not on the inside. Inside, he told Rock to leave his sister alone.

"How's the physics doing?" Rock looked at Ant. "We're in the same physics class. I dropped out last semester and now I need to catch up. Did you get that homework done?"

"Naw, working on it now."

"I hate it. Who cares about force and action and brain chemistry. Monkey experiment was interesting though." Rock got a thoughtful look on his face.

"Hey, Jody, you do it. You know, what that monkey did."

"What did the monkey do," asked Jody.

"He moved a curser with his mind, but then he rang a bell too. It's a new approach to using the brain for physical labor. Its for handicapped people."

"Yah, I didn't know it was so experimental, how'd you get it?" Ant asked.

"I was the experiment."

"Good for you."

Rock cut in, "Remember when you moved the sheets of paper that day. Remember Ant? Those papers flew up and around the room. Better than a monkey ringing a stupid bell."

"I am no monkey." Jody fervently wished he had never bragged about his mental abilities. What was I thinking of? I just wanted them to be my friends. Jody began to turn back to his computer. A habit he had developed to ignore people. His computer was his best friend, and never put him in a social bind. Easer to get along with, too.

"Woa, now he's offended."

"No, I m not, I didn't do anything with the paper. Just forget it, ok?" Jody said and thought better of dismissing his friends so easily. "Can't you just forget I ever did anything?"

"But you did it. I watched you, and so did Ant. We were all sitting right here in this room. I heard you can move other stuff too. Come on Jody, show us."

"Yes, show us," Ant said.

Exasperated, Jody gave them a lecture. "Don't you have any idea what could happen to someone with such an ability. They would grab him and put him in a cage to use for their experiments just to see what made him tick. Like that monkey. That's what they would do."

"We modern people don't do stuff like that." Ant said.

"Ha, Jody is just afraid to show us. It won't hurt you to show us a stunt or two." Rock taunted.

"It's no stunt." Jody admitted.

"He admits its real. Just too chicken to try. Bet you moved that big book. I bet you did move it and didn't want us to know." Rock said.

"You gonna try it, Jody? Ant asked.

"No. I never said I could do anything like that."

"I heard that you wreaked a house once," Rock said, "All by yourself."

Anger suddenly enveloped Jody. He felt his nerves tingle in fear.

"Don't talk about that."

"But I want to know." Rock said, and he turned to Ant, "He even threw an iron across the room once. Can you imagine. Poor, Jody who can't even pick up a pencil can throw a heavy iron."

"Who...told... you...that? I'll...I'll turn them into a mashed potato."

"Maybe your sister told me?" Rock said.

At that Jody jerked in his chair as if he'd been struck by a bolt of lightening. "You lie."

"Hey, watch your blood pressure, ain't nothing to get worked up about," yelled Ant.

"No, ain't nothing to get mad at, I just want to see you do it, that's all. What a great power to throw some thing around with your little head."

"Wonder how much you could lift?" Ant added his two cents to the conversation.

"You both sound like mad scientists." Jody's voice box stuttered and crocked on the s'es. "Maybe I could take my own bath and wipe my own ass too?"

"Hey, don't blame me." Ant said and held up his hands in defeat.

"Didn't mean anything." Rock added.

"Just leave." Jody said.

Suddenly the door to the small den pushed open and Jennifer walked into the room carrying a platter of fresh baked brownies. But each boy glared at her as if she had brought in the cookie monster.

Chapter 17c

When Jennifer brought the plate of brownies into Jody's den she felt the chill right away. The chocolate smell did nothing to thaw the frozen tableau of three angry young men who glared at her in sudden silence.

She tried to make light of the situation by saying, "Ok, you guys, I know you have been talking about me, right?"

But Rock snickered, turning his head away, and Ant stared at her with a frown. The whole room seemed angry as if the wooden doors and windows were mouths waiting to scream at her. She wanted to run out again, but stayed rooted to the floor as the atmosphere thickened almost choking her.

Finally, after standing rigidly still and holding the plate of brownies for a million hours with no one talking or looking at her, or smiling or knowing she was alive, she asked again.

"Hey, common guys, what's the matter?"

Jody swung his chair around and glared at her. His eyebrows frowned together and his eyes looked angry. This was a face he never used to wear and one she never thought she would see on him when he looked at her. Shocked she shuddered, a rivulet of fear ran through her body.

"Jody?" she pleaded through the hot smell of brownies that no one was eating, "You mad or something?"

Jody closed his eyes in exasperation, and shook his head no. Another movement he couldn't do easily under his own control before the operation.

"I m not a little kid you know," she said to the room at large, but her words fell like stones to the floor.

"Well, here are some brownies," she said to the group, as she slammed the plate down on Jody's bookcase. "I baked them myself. If you want more, bake them yourself."

She huffed out of Jody's room and back to the kitchen. It felt good to escape into its warm, inviting womb. Smelled good too. The chocolate odor had reached into every nook and cranny and filled the house with a homey, warmth that helped ease her nerves.

At least it smells like a home even if it isn't. Her mother had taken to baking pies, cakes, bread, and other deserts. Jennifer knew she had never had it so good before. Must be waiting for the bubble to burst. Guess it has.

Just then she heard the outer door slam and then open and then slam again. Silence, except for Little John who was rolling a plastic car around the kitchen table legs and his mother's chair.

As Jen stood eating a brownie and savoring the deep dark chocolate taste, she wondered what had happened in Jody's room. They had all looked angry. Jody was the angriest of all. She thought about going to him, but she didn't dare approach him just now. He was getting grown up and some times cranky when he was absorbed in his computer. Now this.

Jody was becoming more like a stranger, and with her mother always hanging on little John, Jennifer was beginning to feel like a stranger inside her own family.

It hadn't been too long ago that she was the only one who kept whole family going and now she didn't have anything to do except bake stupid brownies. Darn. She

shoved the chair into the table and went up to her bedroom where she could think and frown in her own self-pity.

It didn't last long. After she called her friend Angela and they joked and talked. The conversation with her friend reminded Jen of how lucky she was now. My world is turned right-side-up from horrible. It used to be dark and dingy and drunk. Zee had begun Jody's SSI paperwork before she died which that meant that they now had a new house. "Everything is great," she spoke to her flowered wall paper, "So aren't we supposed to be happy?"

Chapter 18

Lucian pulled up to the curb in front of his house. He'd arraigned to live next door to Jody so he could stay close to him. He put a bar across his steering wheel, "Damn kids," he mumbled and frowned at the indignity of needing to protect his property. They don't know who they're playing with, the punks. He had considered sitting in wait for the ones who had broken his side window and squashing their heads together, but decided it wasn't worth his time.

He had higher stakes, more important than jamming a few kids. It could wait until he was done with Jody. The car only served as camouflage anyway, his disguise called for one, a junker at that, how else to get around as a young adult. Or am I an old teen? He delighted himself so much with his latest insult to human reality that a thrill like sex ran up and down his spine. Damn, but I'm good.

Playing around as Jody's friend wasn't working as fast as it should. He wondered what else he could do to incite Jody from his stubborn refusal to use his mental powers. Maybe I could become a beautiful women with large breasts to match? Might work.

Damn kid has put up a real tight front against using his telekinesis. All Zee's doing. At least that event went well, she's no longer with us. At this he chuckled his grating sound once more and turned the key in his front door. Jody is proving to be more stubborn than I expected. Need to set up a situation where he will be forced to follow my instructions, get that power crashing a few windows.

Lucian wasn't sure how much mental control Jody had gotten from his hospital training. His training should have lasted longer, but that bitch, Zee, cut it off before it was completed. Too late now, need to use what I have. Hate to use his sister again but...

Lucian's thoughts were running so intense when he entered his living room he didn't notice that he was no longer alone, and then the hair on his head stood up and the nerves running along his spine clinched together in a tight knot as he felt the shadow finger touch his neck. His mind ran cold as he turned to face his maker.

The entity in front of him was barely detectable, formed as it was out of nothing but air; yet, as Lucian watched, it grew denser and darker as if a storm cloud had left the sky and entered his room. It remained just barely detectable except in outline, and a shiver ran over his nerves every time he saw a ripple of air move down through its length of nothingness, like a cloud of dirty water, outside of its container.

Fear had caught Lucian up like a pig on a spit. His feet stood rooted to the floor in a frozen tableau of shock. He felt an urge to let go of his urine but was afraid even his pee would stop mid stream in fright. He swallowed the urge.

Up until this moment, he had only seen or felt his boss inside his own mind, as a powerful, black whisper when he made demands. The whisperer had seemed distant and far away. Now, confronted with a close image that was far worse than he'd imagined, his legs wanted to gave way. He wished fervently that this vision was an illusion. Can illusions kill?

Then it got worse. A face began to form out of storm stuff, disappeared and reformed once more into an indistinct face with two red eyes and a gaping, crimson mouth. It was the mouth that Lucian kept staring at. Its neon lips moved and the mouth spoke.

Lucian could feel the hot shape of the words as each foul, breath spasm hit him in the face. By now, anyone one else would have had a heart attack, even himself, if he'd been his true age. But luckily, he now had the form of a young, vigorous man with a very healthy heart.

The mouth threw out sounds that thundered in his mind and hit against his eardrums like a blast from a furnace.

"Has your mind grown so powerful?"

"No...no...I don't know. What you mean?"

Lucian felt another blast of pain inside his head.

"Yes I do, I do, I am not powerful, I know. I need Jody."

"Where is he?"

"Next door, but he...he isn't cooperating?"

"Bring him here."

"He won't come. He refuses to use his mind. He has blocked it out."

This time the pain filled his eyes and sinuses as well as his mind.

"Unblock it."

"Yes, yes yes," Lucian screamed as he felt heat travel down his spine.

"By the next full moon."

The odd thought suddenly passed through Lucian's mind that he'd put people through similar events such as this. They must have felt as bad as he did at them moment, but he quickly deleted the thought.

"I'll try."

"The entities eyes suddenly turned as red as his mouth with flame. The hot breath that flowed out turned to steam as it encircled Lucian's young, strong neck like a wreath.

"Do it."

Lucian tried to speak his agreement, but couldn't. He was gagging and choking. His eyes began to dislodge out of their sockets. His clone body about to betray him by dying.

Suddenly the entity popped out of the room as if he'd never been there. But it was, it was still there inside his mind. Lucian felt a knot of shadow tightening and twisting beneath his scalp. A gaping wound formed in his forehead, imbedding itself in excruciating pain as words seared across it. "Do it." Then it disappeared.

Lucian's body collapsed in a sitting position to the floor and he sprawled in relief. The room, now charged with emptiness, engulfed Lucian in pleasure waves of comfort. He put his hands up to his roaring head. The damage was gone, but not inside. He was expert at changing and reshaping his outer skin, but not the inside of his skull. That part was owned by the entity who's fingerprint weighed heavy within his synapses.

Minutes later, finally able to let out a short, raspy laugh, he pulled back into himself and made plans. More hurriedly than he wished, but now, exceedingly necessary.

Chapter 18b

Doctor Avers picked up the phone on the second ring.

"Yes."

"Doctor Avers, this is Mrs. Holloway, we spoke last week.

"Yes, I know. Did you find something?"

"Almost didn't. Get this. One of the floor polishers remembers Jody and a doctor who greeted him in the hall and then rolled him into a room in the new wing."

"Can you get him in your office. I'd like to come down and speak to him."

"I can do better. We'll come up to you. I was just checking to see if you were in."

A few minutes later Mrs. Holloway and a short, thin white man with nervous, antsy movements walked behind her, plucking at his eyebrows.

"This is Mr. Ashton. He is happy to help."

"Thank you Mr. Ashton. I will be grateful for any information you can give me."

"Well it isn't much. He rubbed his chin, but I did see Jody in a wheel chair about a year ago."

"How do you remember him?"

"I got angry at him."

When Dr. Avers didn't say anything Mr. Ashton continued.

"He almost ran into me with his chair while I was wiping the hall chairs. I stepped away, but he said, 'You should watch where you walk' So I got kinda pissed. You know. But his voice, it was like a machine, robot like. Then I had to feel sorry for him."

"But how do you know his name?" Dr. Avers asked.

"Well, I sensed he was really afraid and all. So I said, 'Hey, that's ok.' and held out my hand for him to shake like a dummy. I felt stupid right away cause he couldn't do a handshake. Didn't know it, right then. I got embarrassed and said, 'Sorry. My name is Mike. What's yours. He told me Jody.'"

"Was anyone with him?"

"No, but when I saw him roll further down the hall Dr. Benenger came out of the examination room door and held it open for him.

"You saw a Dr. Benenger?" Dr Avers tried not to show his excitement.

"Sure did and Dr. Corbin was with him. Cause he stepped out and grabbed Jody's wheel chair and pushed him into the room. He used to be Doctor Arnold's assistant."

"Oh, you don't know how relieved this makes me."

"Don't know if it helps much. Ain't seen any of them lately."

"You were a big help. Thank you very much Mr. Ashton. If there is anything I can do for you, just ask."

Mrs. Holloway spoke up, "Mr. Ashton has a bonus coming. I'll see to that."

"Thank you both," Dr. Avers said just before they turned and left the office.

He'd been cleaning out the office space and packing his books when Mrs. Holloway called. So he dug into the stack he'd already put into the first box and pulled out the index of doctors who worked at the hospital.

I can't believe we hit such pay dirt. Just look them up in the damn directory.

He looked up Benenger, dialed the number to the office.

"Is Dr. Benenger there" he asked the secretary who answered.

"There is no Dr. Benenger here." she said.

"This is Dr. Avers. Dr. Benenger is listed with this number in my hospital directory?"

"Just a minute. I'll check with Dr. Carney"

Dr. Avers didn't need to wait long, she came back in a hurry.

Dr. Benenger was in an accident about six months ago."

"Can you tell me where he is now?"

"He died in the accident, Dr. Carney said."

"Thank you." Dr. Avers said and hung up. He was getting a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. This wasn't turning out like he'd planned. Maybe better luck with the next name?

"Hello, Dr Michaleson's office."

"Not Dr. Corbin?"

"No sir, he is no longer with us."

"This is Dr. Avers. I don't suppose you know why he is no longer with us?"

"He moved out of the hospital months ago. But he had an accident in his home."

"An accident?"

"I don't know the specifics but I think I heard that he hit his head after slipping on a rug. Would you like me to connect you with Dr. Michaleson?"

"No, that won't be necessary."

Dr. Avers sat back thinking. He kept squinting his eyes and drumming his fingers on the desk. He hadn't known any of these doctors, but that wasn't unusual. Boulevard General has a large staff. Well, one more try. He looked up Doctor Arnold, got his office number and dialed.

"No I am sorry. Dr. Arnold had a stroke about six months ago."

"Dead?"

"No, he is in... Just a minute I'll check, Country Estate Residential Home. The staff sent a card."

"Thank you"

Dr Avers called information and hooked up to the nursing station at Country Estate. He learned that Dr. Arnold was now a human vegetable.

Dr. Avers debated whether he should contact Meyers. He reflected that it was a good thing they were friends or else he could never call him with such flimsy information. Two doctors dead, and one who would be better off dead, but all suffered accidents under different circumstances. Is that important, does it add up? Maybe so, if it has to do with Jody. Better call.

He dialed, but Meyers wasn't in right then and they didn't know where he was.

"Tell him to call Dr. Avers. Its important."

"Yes sir, I will when he comes in. Ah, just a minute doctor. I think he's here."

"Dr. Avers heard the desk clerk ask, "You want to speak to a Dr. Avers. Says it's important."

"Sure do. Always have time for Joe. Switch it over to my office."

"Hey, what's up?" Meyers asked into the phone after a minute.

"Listen. We found a man who remembers Jody. Even remembered seeing him with a few doctors."

"No kidding?"

“Yes, it was a man in maintenance.”

“That figures. The real bad guys always forget that the hired help have eyes. Give me their names. Can’t wait to check them out.”

“I already checked.”

“And?”

“Two are dead. Two different accidents.”

“The fish are beginning to get real stinky.”

“I know. Their names are Dr. Benenger and Dr. Corbin. Looks like a dead end.”

“I’ll look into what happened with each, but Joe, I think you are right. It always dead-ends with that Lucian character. Any more info?”

“Yes, one doctor is in a nursing home, brain dead.”

“Doesn’t leave much to go on does it?”

“You think it might be important?”

“Anything that might give a lead to Zee’s killer is important. But in this instance I think the clues are as dead as those doctors. But I’ll get him eventually, you can bet on it.”

Chapter 19

Deep between the folds of earth known in geology as the Missouri plate lay buried a ten-foot long ship composed of a diamond hard substance, extraterrestrial in origin. The life form inside the container, actually intertwined within its boundaries, constantly changed it's own contours back into itself, folding, then stretching and refolding back in a never ending maze of tissue paper wings multiplied upon wings inside its life ship.

The ship resembled a faceted, simple cut diamond roughened at its edges. Although, it had flowed along the mantle with the earth tides for millennium, it was not impervious to the great heat and pressure that boiled up from below the earth crust. Its faceted edges were beginning to crumble and crack. One or two facets had developed fine hairlines. After thousands of years, the organic mass inside the diamond boulder was in a dire need to get out. Not only out, but off the earth.

The Entity knew that release would happen naturally when the next earthquake shook its ship, which had actually been an escape space-pod from the millennium war he'd fought with the angels. The ship now stood a few feet north towards the edge of the weakest fracture fault below the river. The next earthquake, this one planned by the Entity, would open up the rift, tumble the boulders and release the ship. The ship's release almost happened in 1918 when the Mississippi River system turned around, but instead the ship was pushed in the precarious position of being sandwiched between the two huge slabs of granite and hanging over a deep earth fissure.

The ground tests for nuclear armaments in the 50's and 60's had helped inch the plate sideways towards the lip, but not far enough for his escape. The Entity had planned that the next test would push it beyond the two granite slabs and towards the river once more, but the next test never came. The test ban treaty disrupted the possibility. And so I remain stuck here forever, not by God, as their holy bible says, but by mankind's impotence.

The Entity thought he would be chained to the earth forever while so many other worlds waited his ministrations, but the early earthquake had given him new avenues of possible release by moving his prison towards a fault line. All he needed now was another earthquake and then to be lifted out of the thick muck beneath the river.

His mind was free, had always been free, it was his real form, his beautiful, winged form that lay imprisoned in the escape ship. Even Adam and Eve hadn't seen his real body in all its glory. Now the whole world will see it, just before I leave.

But the attempt to move the ship could get critical at certain points along the path. Extremely precise movements would be necessary to maneuver it to the exact spot so that when the bomb triggered the earthquake the ship would be lined up with the sky. Then it could rise through the water and lift off for the first time in millennia.

A small problem of lift, but one that could be dealt with easily, which was what his lieutenant was working on right now. Only Lucian and his son Jody and a few other minds like him, unfortunately deceased, could maneuver his ship out of the earth. It must be done at the right moment, exact alignment and timing is critical.

His life ship had deteriorated greatly since he last checked. New, deep cracks had developed stress from the lava below the granite slabs. He'd been busy attending to his clones and the many sin-hungry souls who roamed the earth; so hadn't noticed that his

containment had developed such large cracks. The Entity dare not allow those cracks get larger, or when he did manage to lift off from earth, the ship could break up in space. No, he must escape from this prison soon.

Besides, I am fed up with humanity. I got tired of those silly humans long ago. Even the game of grappling for souls has become too easy, they dangled on my hook like aphids on a leaf.

A few of his warrior clones had become so successful they were still talked about by humans, like Jack the Ripper. Although, he usually kept them hidden, infiltrated into humanity's hoards until he needed a specific job done. Like Lucian, my highest lieutenant. Now there is a lieutenant with such hard driving skill that he can play with those dumb human minds easily, but he is working too slow at this last job.

The entity liked to think of his clone army as individuals, like his children, but they were not, they were more like his own fingers; and, just as any digit might do in time, they could develop a crick and kink. In fact, at this moment, one of his children was taking a refresher course in geology because he'd forgotten specific details, like where to place the bomb. To create an earthquake, you must set the dynamite with exact perfection.

On the thought of leaving, the Entity remembered the millions of souls he had dragged down to rot in dungeons and caves inside the earth? Would they dissolve? Or dissipate without his presence? Rise up to heaven? He didn't know and this lack of knowledge surprised him. His warrior, Lucian, might have chuckled at such diminutive knowledge, but the entity didn't need or care about such emotional support or reassurance. He knew what must be done, and soon.

Chapt 20

Having just left Angela's house, Jen decided that instead of going straight home she'd walk around in her new neighborhood to get the feel of it. She remembered getting lost once before when she lived in the house near the corner. Strange, but I feel so much older than I was back then, like I've lived years and years more. Silly.

She laughed at herself and kicked at a stone on the sidewalk. Dinnertime and the street was empty, so she decided to play her old game. The one she played when she lived here before, when Zee talked to her about real angels. Mr. Smith said so too. He told me I have a guardian angel.

Tonight, I think I'll have two. Immediately, she slid into lock step between her two angel keepers. The game was that every time she moved, her angel moved too. She swung her arms out wide and imagined her two guardians swinging their arms wide too with their white gowns flowing. Then Jen twirled and laughed as her angels followed her around in a circle and skipped up and down the sidewalk, her angels skipping right along with her. They laughed too. Jen thought she could just barely see a whisper of ghostly angel face or hair and a tinkle of laughter, just a bit. She laughed again in delight and danced towards home.

Zee taught me all about angels, she told her two companions, as they danced home. She taught Jody because he needed a guardian angel so bad, but I was listening. I didn't have any friends either except Zee and Jody and then you visited me whenever I was lonely.

"This is so nice." Jen sang out into the air as she skipped across the street. Look, I am older now, but I still believe in you. A bird suddenly screeched at her. She laughed out loud when she looked up into the fat maple tree that was pushing up the cement on the sidewalk and the gray sparrow yelling down at her. Then kept going, sometimes walking and sometimes skipping from one crack to another.

I listened to Jody meditate too. He doesn't do it any more. Zee thought I was too young to understand but I wasn't. I know about angels, don't I? She smiled and turned in a circle once more with her hands out as though pulling someone around with her. She tripped on a chunk of sidewalk cement and almost went flying but caught herself in time.

Yes, you help people, like Zee helped Jody. But real angels come from heaven don't they. Jen looked up into the falling dark sky as she walked and pretended that each wispy cloud was an angel in disguise hovering above the earth. The angels in heaven look down on us all the time, don't they? In order to better see the angels in the sky, she sat down on the steps of the abandoned house behind her and looked directly up at the sky.

The dark was just beginning its nightly glow in the west, the moon still barely detectable and seemed to be pushing at the clouds to make them disappear behind the trees. Need to make way for the stars. Do angels live on stars? She asked her companions as she sat amid the rubble with her head tilted towards the new brightening stars. She imagined angels falling down to earth like snow flakes and lifted her cupped hands up to catch them.

Suddenly it wasn't angels she saw any more, but two glowing red circle dots, like small flames. The dots grew apart as if they were coming towards her, two furnace doors opening up to look at her. She yanked her arms down and instinctively hugged them to

her chest. The two embers grew a purple red outline of a mouth below the red embers like smeared lipstick.

When the lips opened to speak, Jen got control of herself and tried to wake up. Must have dozed off? But the small fiery eyes and mouth were still hanging above her.

Zee spoke to Jennifer, "Go home now," as she sat on the step looking at the stars, but there were too many things to look and think about on Jennifer's mind. She was having too much fun to pick up Zee's words. Until the Entity pushed through the dark evening air. That was when Zee pushed and screamed at Jennifer in panic, "Move."

Suddenly, Jen felt a push against her back like a strong, silent shout that said move. She did. She jumped up and ran down the white cement sidewalk as fast as she could go, skirting around bikes and cars blocking her way until she finally turned the corner to home. She was still out of breath, but safe on her own porch.

She opened the door and slammed it tight into the door jam and set the dead bolt before leaning against it to catch her breath. Her breathing was labored and tight. She could feel her heart pounding in her chest. It took a while before her nerves quieted and her breath slowed down.

I am so...so glad that mom or Jody are not here in this room right now. She could just see Jody's friend Rock or Ant tease her about being afraid of the dark. But I am not afraid of the dark, not really. It was just night fears, that's what Zee called them once, night fears. But the memory grabbed at her emotions as she sucked in another breath. I was in danger and it wasn't any imaginary angel who pushed me off those steps. It was Zee, I just know it. She is my guardian now.

Better not tell Jody though because I would need to tell him about the red eyes. It would make him scared. Best not to get too scared; besides, Zee is here to help us. Jen laughed as soon as she could catch a good, long breath. Yes, Zee is an angel now. She quietly skipped up the stairs to her bedroom.

Chapter 21

Ant came in on schedule at 6:00 pm right on the dot and Jody enjoyed teasing him about it. Jody had given him a key so he didn't need to wake the family with his knock. His mother slept a lot since she no longer drank and Jen usually went into her bedroom to read and do homework after dinner.

"Hey, your on time again. Most people are off at least a minute or two but no, you gotta be here right on time. How do you do it. Your car must drive itself."

Ant smiled at Jody as he went into the linen closet to get a night pad and washcloths.

"Magic, told you before my car is magic. Damn light at the Blvd almost got me though. This old man driving was poking along and wouldn't let me through the yellow light. Thought I'd break my record. Can't do that can I."

"No, I like you on time, helps me know when I got to take a break."

"You need to turn that computer off sometimes. You're going to turn into a computer. Picture at the show you might like. It's not stupid like most of them. I know, most movies are kinda dumb. But you know, sometimes you just need to hang loose and let it all go. Like stop thinking and just feel once in a while."

"Yah, I think you're right. My butt gets weary. How's that for low down."

Ant laughed, "Hay, you just made a joke. See you're not dead yet."

"I'd like to go to the show. Any movie you want to see. You're right, I need to get out of here and have fun. But I got so much catching up to do."

"Well, going to a movie is part of the catching up and there's a few good ones out right now. We could see a romantic comedy, war action, or mystery, whatever. I think I know which one you'd really like. Course, Rock would want to see the action thriller if you insist on him going with us."

"You make that sound like I always need Rock by my side. Don't" Jody said as he felt the washcloth rub his arms. He enjoyed the tactile feeling of the rough cloth. Ant rubbed with the washcloth too vigorously at times but Jody liked it. His skin needed the roughness. When his mother or Jen washed him it felt too smooth.

"Rock don't need to go. Lets just go when we want. But you act like you don't like Rock too much."

"I hate to say it because he such a good friend of yours, but I don't. I don't know why. Just something about him. He's friendly enough. Hey, don't pay any attention to my hang-ups."

"Besides you, he's the only friend I got," Jody said. "It's because you have such a different personality. You are more mature. Don't you think."

"Maybe. How's that for a good rub down."

"Yah, I like your rubs, it feels good. It stirs up my skin."

"It's something they teach us at med school. Helps the blood circulate."

"How is school going? ..."

They talked and visited for the requested time that Ant was scheduled to be at Jody's house in the evening. Jody liked Ant and pressed him about when they could go to the show. Now that Ant had talked him into it, he was anxious to go.

"How about Monday?" Ant said.

"How about now?" suggested Jody? "The late show."

"Why not? Sounds good.? Are you sure you can stay awake?" Ant teased.

"That's stupid." Jody said.

"Guess it is. Should we ask Jennifer?"

"I think she has to study. I'll leave a voice message for mom and Jen."

He was excited now. He'd never been in a movie theater before, but he didn't want to tell Ant. So he just grinned as Ant helped him onto the seat of his car, a red 89 Chevy and buckled him up, then put his chair in the trunk.

"I need to strap you in good so you don't wiggle around. Is your head resting tight enough? Need to be extra careful. Not sure my agency would approve of this night trip.

"You're off the clock. It feels good to be out in the night air, and look at that moon."

"Great, ah. Show is only ten minutes away, we'll make it just in time."

At the theater, Jody said, "This is really great."

"Glad you like it, but it's only the previews." Ant laughed. "Used to be that people in wheelchairs couldn't fit into the shows. Now they make a special isle up front. Course your chair is so little I could sit both you and your chair on my lap."

"Be hard for you to see the show through my chair. Besides, I refuse to sit on any man's lap." Jody chuckled at his own joke and then felt self-conscious about the sound of his voice in public. He looked around but no one seemed to pay special attention to him. Then the movie began with loud music so he didn't think any more about his voice and talked to Ant and laughed when he felt like it.

The movie was about ghost, but the part that caught Jody's interest was the man who lost his faith. The idea of losing faith made him feel guilty because he hadn't been meditating like Zee had taught him. Did I find faith with her help? If so, I lost it again at her death. He wasn't going back to church any time soon, that much he was sure of. But what about the angel who had helped him search for Jen, had that been real? He wasn't sure now.

He remembered what Zee told him, "There are real angels, but they just can't be seen by most people. You need a lot of faith to see an angel."

Do I have any faith left in me? Ok, stop thinking and enjoy the movie. He did, and the movie was scary and funny in parts. A good night out.

As they left the theater, with Ant walking beside Jody's chair, Jody asked Ant if he believed in God.

"Not sure. Don't go to church much, unless Jen makes me." Ant and Jody both smiled at the mention of Jen, but memories of their trip to church clouded the smile for Jody.

"But put me on a sinking ship and see how fast I can find belief in God. Same for everyone."

"I used to know someone who believed very strongly in God and angels. She talked to them. But they didn't save her. She died anyway."

"Yah, that's a crock, ain't it? Lot's of good people die. Maybe that's the only ones God wants." He chuckled.

"You think God leaves us sinners here so we can keep on learning?"

"I don't know. Who can explain it." Ant shrugged.

"Ok, off the subject. Thanks for bringing me to the show. I really enjoyed it."

“You don’t get out enough. I might make the agency pay for it, call it therapy.”

“You want me to pay your way?”

“No. I was just joking. You paid your way in, didn’t you. I paid mine. That’s good enough.”

“Guess so. I keep laughing at what you said about holding my chair in your lap. I keep seeing me sitting in a chair high over head with you holding me up” He chuckled as Ant unlocked his car and lifted Jody into the seat for the ride home.

On the ride back to the house, Jody kept thinking of the movie theater and Ant’s comments about belief in God. Finally, the car pulled up to Jody’s curb and Ant helped Jody back into his chair. The air had gotten chilly with a high wind.

“Need to get you into the house.”

“Hey, I am just in a chair, not sickly.”

“I know.”

“Besides, I might work on that program I put on hold.”

“I don’t believe this guy.” Ant shook his head. “You work too hard,” Ant said as he pushed Jody into the house. “Let me at least get you ready for bed, then if you want, you can go back to your computer program.”

He left in less than ten minutes and Jody did go back into his program but his mind was occupied by thoughts of God and angels and he couldn’t keep it on his study. Annoyed, he clicked the computer off and sat for a long time contemplating his own faith and the fact that he didn’t seem to have any.

Jen did. She went to church every now and then. Though she stopped asking Jody to join her. He wouldn’t go again after that statue fell during mass. I must have lost control for some reason and don’t want to chance that again.

Do I still know how to meditate? He thought of Zee’s instructions and decided to try. He closed his eyes and relaxed his whole body and imagined sinking into a deep deep well then floating free in the water. He felt the buoyancy holding him up and the softness of the water. He began to lift up towards the surface. Higher and higher until he broke through to the air and sunshine. It was night above the lake he floated in and a million stars glittered in the sky above him. He lay back and floated as he watched the stars.

He felt completely relaxed and apart from the real world. But as he looked up at the black night sky it was suddenly broken by two red embers glaring down at him. They stabbed his soul with fire. They grew as if they were coming closer and Jody was beginning to feel hot, the water had begun to boil.

He jerked out of his floating meditation and felt his head go beneath the water. Damn if he didn’t feel like water had gotten in his throat.

Imagination, only my imagination, he repeated to himself. But the red eyes had felt dirty like Lucian felt dirty, dirty with evil. His body felt hot and ...damp? Couldn’t be. I haven’t left my chair. Must be sweat because I am right here inside my house. But he shuddered when he remembered those red eyes glaring at him. No more meditation for me. Not for a long while.

During the night his dreams kept repeating the scene with the two red eyes but in the dream they kept moving closer and closer. In one dream he saw Lucian kneeling and praying to the red eyes. His sleep was fitful the whole night, and he woke up feeling just as tired as when he went to bed.

Chapt 22b?

His ploy hadn't worked. The whole push was going too slow. Lucian could still feel the pressure inside his head from the Entity. Need to get Jody motivated somehow. He wanted Jody to think his mind was out of control. If Jody thought he was bad then I could push him over the brink. Didn't work so now I need to use more active persuasion. Little Jen again? No, only if all else fails. Keep her for that final move.

He thought Jody would have went nuts by now, then he be malleable and controllable. I know his mind and how it should work. Damn I gave it to him. Putty, that's what I need, putty, but he runs to Meyers. That damn detective keeps getting in my way. Lucian delighted for a minute thinking of different ways he could get rid of Meyers, but thought better of it. No time. No, my most important goal right now is appeasing the Entity. Once more he felt the invisible fingers of the Entity wiggle into his brain as if to push him to hurry.

Need to come up with something to push Jody over the edge. K-Mart should have gotten rid of Meyers if he thought Jody killed that lady. Didn't work. My own youthful mind isn't working out as well as I'd planned either. Need to get rid of it too. Then he realized how he could solve both his problems at the same time.

He manually set up the scene, didn't want to use his mental powers right then. Need to keep them sharp and full of energy for the body change. As soon as his set up was ready and complete, he went next door to invite Jody to his home for a game of chess.

"Hey, bro. Came to get you for a game of chess at my house."

"Don't know. Busy. Besides I can play chess with an expert on my own computer."

"Yah, but you need to get out of the house. Come on, its only next door."

"We could play it here."

"Man, you don't even have a chess set. You should see mine, each piece is a real figure of nobility. What do you say?"

Actually Lucian wasn't going to let Jody refuse. The kid was helpless sitting in his chair and he was coming over to his house whether he wanted to or not.

Zee pushed in between Jody and the computer with her ghost self and whispered into his ear, "No Jody, No." But Jody wasn't listening. He was already pulling away from the front of the computer screen to go with Rock. Hurriedly, she entered the inside of his computer. She'd never done anything like this before so she wasn't sure what she could do. Then she thought she might be able to displace the pixels that covered the screen surface. With her ghostly finger she began to write the word, NO. Then she realized that it read as ON so she wrote it again but this time backwards. Now it read right, NO. Below the huge word she wrote, DON'T GO, backwards. But Jody had already turned his chair around to face Rock. Zee could do nothing to stop him.

Jody was beginning to feel uneasy about leaving with Rock. He didn't know why but a tingle of dread run down his spine. Rock was very persuasive so he shrugged off the feeling of dread.

"Hey, I am not going to take no for an answer." Rock said. Then he actually grabbed hold of Jody's chair and began to roll him towards the door.

"Hey, what if I don't want to go."

"You need the sunshine of outdoors."

"In your house? Playing chess?"

"Well, there's sun on the way there." Rock laughed. "I have a special chess move I want to show you. You won't believe it."

That did it. Jody decided he didn't mind getting out of the house for a bit anyway. He let Rock roll him out of the house, down his ramp, across the grass, to the stairs of the house Rock was renting next door.

Then Rock lifted Jody up, chair and all, and set him on the porch. Jody had never looked at Rock's house before and was surprised at the paint that was peeling off the porch floor and the front door that didn't have a screen. Puzzling, wasn't he supposed to be taking care of the house for rent? Oh, well, the life of a bachelor, Jody thought and followed Rock through the doorway and into his living room.

His chair rolled across a hard, brown painted floor. The windows were bare and the room was sparse of furniture. A card table was set up with a metal folding chair on one side. The windows were missing curtains but the blinds did the trick. Jody thought it odd that the blinds were down and closed up. It made the living room darker than it needed to be especially after Rock closed the front door. A floor lamp was on near the chessboard so there was plenty of light where they would play.

"Why don't you open up the blinds. Get more light in here?" Jody asked Rock.

"Keeps the hot sun out." Was all he said as he set down a glass of pop with a straw in it. "See I thought of your comfort."

Jody rolled over to the table. It was a very nice set of chess pieces. Glass statues of kings and his entourage.

"You'll need to make my moves for me. I'll call out the number square?"

"I get to go first because you are the wiz here. Don't you think?"

"Guess so."

Jody sat and waited for a long while for Rock to make his first move.

"Hey Bro." Rock said, "Drink your pop while I am thinking about my first move. I put ice in it for you."

Since he had to wait for Rock, Jody did take a sip of the cold pop sitting on his side of the table with a straw in it. He was proud of his ability to drink on his own without help. Never used to be able to bend his head down far enough. Now he could bend his head and upper body down towards the straw and glass. It is a real improvement for me. Feels good.

The pop was sweet and cold. Ice tingled as Jody moved the straw with his mouth. He took another small sip and waited for Rock to move. Then he took three long cool sips before he began to straighten his back upright to watch Rock's first move. He must have moved too suddenly. He felt slightly dizzy. Jody shook his head to clear it. Another move he couldn't do voluntarily before. His head didn't clear. Instead he felt worse.

"I...d...don't...feel...so...good..." He tried to tell Rock but his words came out slurred. He blinked his eyes.

"Hey, buddy, you don't look so hot. I better get you some water."

With those words Rock picked up the glass of pop and headed into the kitchen.

Jody waited for Rock to come back with the water; his insides felt sick and his mind was growing more confused by the moment. Suddenly the kitchen exploded and blast of plaster and noise poured out so far, Jody felt intense heat hit his face.

Still dizzy and with the sound still ringing in his ear, Jody knew he had to help Rock and began to roll towards the kitchen. The second explosion stopped him cold. Hot fire poured out from the kitchen doorway which billowed large quantities of black smoke towards him.

Still dizzy and sick, he looked at the fire with his mind swimming in heat. Suddenly, the heat became so intense it opened his eyes and mouth to the flame shooting towards him.

By the time the fire licked at the card table, Jody was no longer there to see it. Instinct had forced him to teleport himself out of the fiery house. He sat on the porch in his wheel chair taking in big gulps of clean air. The door behind him was still closed but smoke billowed out from around its edges as if to grab at him with sooty fingers.

A man ran up the sidewalk and on to the porch, skipping the stairs as he talked into a phone. Next, the man grabbed Jody's chair and rolled him down off the porch and to the lawn. He went back and kicked a number of times at the front door and then ran into the house. He soon came out again to stand by Jody's chair.

"Nothing to do but wait for the fire trucks." He said as he made another call.

They could hear the siren coming down Moran already.

Jody was shaken, but stammered to say, "My...friend...is..."

The man just looked down at him with pity, but Jody wasn't sure why. Then the firemen began running up the stairs with the long fire hose.

"Get that chair off this lawn" one fireman yelled.

The stranger rolled Jody over to the front yard next door.

"This is where I live." Jody choked out.

"I know. I called Meyers. He'll be here soon."

Jody felt puzzled that this stranger knew of his Uncle Louie, but very comforted to know his uncle was on his way.

Chapter 23

Right after the incident in K Mart, Meyers had put Johnson on the investigation to check out Rock, low priority, he'd told him. Don't have a specific reason to check, just a gut feeling. He decided he'd check into the time element himself. He didn't want to answer any question as to why he was checking the time from his own car. He was in luck because the same parking space was available and an old 85 Ford truck was parked where Mrs. Hargrave had been that night.

He reenacted his own steps first as he pretended to put Jody into his seat and then go around the back to open the trunk to put packages inside. Two and a half minutes. Next he moved around the car to where he thought Rock might have waited to get in. From there he quickly walked to where Mrs. Hargrave's car had been parked. He bent down pushed at the tire, jumped back up and returned to his own car. Two minutes. Only two minutes to get back and look us straight in the eye as if nothing was wrong. But what the hell does it mean? Surly Rock would have no reason to stab her tire, but it might explain how it exploded.

Meyers was driving back to the station when he got a call from Detective Johnson.

"Better come quick. There's been a fire. Rescued a young man in a wheel chair from the front porch of Rock's house. We got him off before he was hurt. Fire trucks came quick and put the fire out before it did much damage.

"Oh, my God. I'll be there in," He looked at his watch, "Five minutes."

Two minutes later, with Meyers about to turn onto Farnsworth, his phone rang. It was Detective Johnson again, picking up on the story from where he'd left off.

"Something in the house you gotta see. No shit. I was in time to get the kid off the porch, but some one in the house is gone. You on your way?

"Pulling up now." Meyers threw the phone to the seat and slammed on his brakes behind the fire truck blocking the street, jumped out of the car, and ran to Jody.

Jody looked severely dejected, as if the whole world had just kicked him in the pants. Meyers could see that he'd been crying, tear tracks were vivid on his soot darkened face, but the light that glowed in his eyes as Meyers approached felt heartwarming. He walked up and grabbed Jody's small shoulders and gave him a reassuring smile. His dark soot face and chair stood in stark contrast to the golden leaves that swirled in the wind and littered the lawn.

"What happened?" he asked as he brushed golden leaves out of Jody's hair.

"D...don't... know, it just started. Exploded sort of. Me and Rock were going to play a game of chess. Rock went into the kitchen and it exploded."

"We'll talk more later. I'll push you back to your house where you can be comfortable. Then I need to go over to Rock's house and take a look.

"Why is there so many police going in and out of the house."

The fire trucks were revving up to leave and Meyers saw the Medical Examiner walk up the sidewalk and enter the house.

"That's a good question, Jody, a very good one."

Meyers pushed Jody up the ramp and onto his own porch where Jody's mother was standing on the porch with a coffee pot in her hand. She invited Meyers and Jody to have some. "Need something hot in the stomach."

"Good for Jody, but I got to get over there and see what the fuss is. I'll be back later." Meyers said and then leapt off the porch and ran next door.

As soon as Meyers entered the house, Johnson motioned him over to a room straight across from the front door. He made it through the house in three strides and entered just as the M. E. stood to get a kink out of his back. Stink and wet black wood surrounded them in the room, but Meyers didn't look at it, his eyes stayed on the body laying sprawled face down on the blackened floor. The view didn't afford much, only the person's singed hair.

The M. E. was shaking his head. "Strange, real strange."

"What?"

"Need to take a better look at this one in the morgue. The Medical Examiner, Meyers wasn't sure of his name because he was new on the job, Lofton or something, looked over at him and said, "I'll do this one right away. Have the results in a few hours."

"That bad?"

The M. E., bent once more over the body, looked up and said, "Oh, you'll love this one." He laughed.

Meyers bent down and looked closely the body. It has burned somewhat but not enough to hide the fact that it could possibly be Rock, but he didn't think so. Something wasn't right. Too fat? Too something?

"I'll follow you. Be there in a few."

The M. E. nodded. "Yep, this one is for the books."

When Meyers looked at him, the M. E. said, "Don't want to say right now."

Meyers left, not sure who the person was who had died in Rock's house, but almost sure it wasn't Rock. He pushed through the morgue and news photographers as they entered the small room and went to the outside once more where he could breath fresh air. Then he went next door once more to talk to Jody.

Jody's mother met him at the door, a worried look on her face. "Where's Jody?"

"He's in his room. Go on in."

"Jody," Meyers asked, "Did Rock go someplace after the fire?"

"Rock isn't there?"

"Did you think Rock was hurt?"

"I don't know. I went to help him, but it exploded again."

"I can't say for sure, but I don't think he is there. Any idea where he might be?"

Jody stayed silent and shook his head, an angry look grew on his face because he was just beginning to realize that he might have been duped.

"He's your friend, I thought you might know more about him than I do." Uncle Louie said.

Jody's anger when he answered showed the stress he was in, "Why'd he leave me inside that house? A house that was on fire? Maybe on purpose?"

Meyers nodded. "I don't know. Was anyone else there?"

"No." We were alone."

Meyers debated whether to mention the body but realized it would hit the news soon anyway.

"A body was laying on the back porch, just beyond the kitchen. It didn't look like Rock to me. You don't know any thing about who it could be?"

At the look of astonishment on Jody's face, Meyers was sure he didn't.

"Ok, I on my way to the morgue. I'll let you know more later.

Meyers was becoming concerned that events were speeding out of his control. Before he left for the morgue he asked after Jennifer.

"She's ok," Mrs. Boyd said, "With her friend Angela."

"Call and check on her please. I'll be back soon." With that he left in a hurry and drove to the new morgue the city had built.

After some small talk with the secretary, Meyers was admitted into the morgue's inner sanctum. The M. E. motioned to Meyers to come and view the body on the table.

"This one gonna be yours," he asked?

"Yeah, need to know who it is as soon as possible."

"Well, may have a hard time with that. You will be happy to know that it has been a slow day, so I have lots of time. This old body is a nice surprise. Began the preliminary examination already, not done yet. You want an educated guess? He paused for a moment as if waiting for a nod.

Meyers just looked at him as if he was nuts to ask, so the M. E. continued.

"That body is at least a year old. Been moved from a grave, looks like. Dirt in its throat under its fingernails, excreta. Next step is to look for insect larva to get the exact length of time it'd been buried. Quite some time, I suspect. You got your hands full with this one." He shook his head.

"I want to see its face"

"Photos on the table. Might be easier."

Meyers agreed, it was easier. He noticed right away that it did resemble Rock, if you looked past the dirt and decay. A twin?

"I'd better see this one up close." The M. E. led Meyers to the head of the table and to the face and head of the corpse.

Face like Rock's. Meyers thought. Hair different and the eyes. Of course dead always looks different. Its mouth gapped open showing even, dirty teeth.

"What kind of cloths?"

"You can look if you like. Ordinary youngish style. No ID, though."

"Earring? Rock wore an earring in one ear, left I believe."

"No earring on this guy." The doctor took a glass and looked at both ears closely. "No marks of piercing either. Think this is your guy?"

"Not the one it should be. I'd like the report as soon as possible."

"Sure, everyone does. You'll have it by the end of the day or tomorrow. I have hardly begun. Evidence is popping out of this guy. As in beetle. Look at that little bugger."

The gleam in the ME's eyes was evident.

That was too much even for Meyers. Time to get out of there.

"I'll pull out all the gruesome details for you." The doctor laughed as Meyers went quickly towards the door.

This situation is worse than the doctor knows, Meyers thought as he walked out of the morgue. That body was Rock but it wasn't? How could that be? Meyers was thinking twin again. He called to check on Jody.

"Need to go to the station for a bit." He told him, "Be there later."

Back at the station he received more unsettling news. The detectives who he had put on the computer search for Rock came up with nothing. There was no such person named Rockford W. Davenport? in the phone book, Google, Michigan I. D., or Social Security. No such person existed. If true, then who was it that befriended Jody? They'd need to do a dental search.

It was then that Meyer's mind leapt to the idea of Lucian. He suddenly had a vivid picture in his head of the man as he slunk away from Zee that day. Has he mocked us all with such a lie? Yes, Meyers was sure of it now, and as much as he hated to do it, he had to warn Jody that his father was back. The mockery of friendship and the fire was like Lucian's fingerprint.

Did Lucian kill someone who looked like Rock and stash his body in a grave? Whose body was it? Was it meant to fool them into thinking it was Rock who had died? But why? Maybe the fire was supposed to burn long enough to damage the body. Was it an attempt to kill Jody? Not if Lucian needed to use him. To implicate him. Why?

If it was Lucian who planned it, then he had moved too fast to get his plan straight. The fire hadn't burned long enough. Rock was a damn good disguise Meyers had to admit. Fooled me completely. He called for a patrol car to cover the front of Jody's house. Now that I am almost sure that Lucian is back, we will be laying in wait for him.

Chapter 25-

Lucian had shaken off the shape of his young Rock form with ease and this new shape pleased him immensely; he flexed his muscles. He thought it was going well, or it would have been except the fire was put out too soon. But Jody had needed to use his mind to get out of the burning house, just as Lucian had planned.

Its time to use that last ace. Lucian wasn't sure why he felt reluctant to kidnap Jennifer again, but thought it probably had something to do with her escaping him once. It boded bad luck to try the same thing twice, but he might need to do so. It certainly wasn't because he liked her. He didn't like anyone; although, he knew he was excellent at the pretending to do so.

Suddenly two red eyes penetrated his mind and began to burn like embers. He could feel his guts start to fire up as the embers seemed to flow with the blood cursing down his body. It suddenly felt as if excruciating hot knives were tearing and cutting his veins apart in his belly, arms and legs. He thought he couldn't take anymore and then it stopped. The two burning eyes spoke into his head. "Do it now. Within the week." And then was gone.

Lucian fell to the floor like a simmering wet rag. He wasn't sure if it was from relief the Entity was gone or the relief of pain. The floor held him like a magnet and he didn't want to get up. His mind was powerful, but his new, reformed body wasn't working well enough yet to take what the Entity tried to dish out. The new body hadn't been completely under his control when the Entity came. Now he lay on the floor for a long moment without moving and wondered if this form was more broken than he thought.

He tried moving an arm and foot. Good, ok. He slowly picked his new, young, muscular body up off the floor. Need to pull myself back together as quickly as possible. Due at Jody's house for the evening appointment within an hour. Need to hurry. Time to use that ace.

When Ant locked his door and turned to walk to his car, he was confronted by a stranger on the sidewalk with a baseball hat pulled down across his face and wearing a long overcoat. The stranger asked him for a light.

"No, I don't smoke."

Then suddenly the hat lifted up off the stranger's face and Ant saw who's face it was—his own. His eyes popped open wide and he swallowed a gulp of surprise before his juggler vein was squeezed shut as if by magic. Before he blacked out into complete unconsciousness he felt himself lifted and carried for a short distance and thrown down on sharp gravel then covered by a coat before he blacked out completely.

Chapter 26

Lucian, now reshaped into an almost exact copy of Ant, used his key to unlock the front door.

Jody turned as he entered his room, "Your late. Almost ten minutes late."

"Oh, sorry, I took a nap and overslept. Plus, it was like trying to get into Fort Knox. There is a policeman out there who wasn't keen on letting me in.

"Oh, its nothing. Uncle Louie is just protecting me because of the fire. Did you hear about the fire?"

"No."

"At Rock's house today, and no one can find Rock."

"He's probably at a night class. Wouldn't doubt it."

"Don't think so. Hey, you broke your perfect record because of a stupid nap? I don't believe it."

"The course I am taking right now is a killer. Can't get a grip on it. Chemistry you know. I am not good at chemistry."

"Yeah, I can't help you with that. I've never studied chemistry. Don't have the facilities. I'll need to go to a class at Wayne State. Maybe next year."

Lucian was wondering how he could get Jody out of the house when Jody gave him the lead he needed.

"It'll be good for me, I need to get out more. I enjoyed going to the show the other evening. We need to go again. Doesn't need to be a good show. It is just that I need get out. Need to get my mind off things.

"Why not now? Ant asked.

Lucian's time to make his move had narrowed considerably. He needed to grab Jody and take him to the site, now. Red eyes said "By the end of the week."

"Now? Remember how much it cost last time. They charge too much at night."

"Don't matter. Not if you want to go."

Just then Jen walked past the open door to Jody's room. She called out hello to them.

Ah, my ace. Lucian thought. "Hi, Jennifer. You want to go to the show with us?"

"To a movie? At night?"

"Why not?"

"Oh, it'd be so exciting." Jennifer said.

"No, I don't like the idea." Jody suddenly said. "Jen needs to get to bed so she can get up for school tomorrow."

"Oh, please Jody. I want to go. Besides it would take our mind off the fire." Jen asked Ant, "Did you hear about..."

Jody listened to Jen prattle to Ant non-stop. He realized that a movie might be what they both needed to keep worry away. So Jody agreed and they went out to Ant's car after assuring the policeman parked in front that Jody had the right to leave with Ant.

"I am still laughing about what you said the last time we went to the show." Jody said as they rolled out to the car.

"What was that? I don't remember."

"About how we could sit in the show." Jody laughed.

"What's so funny? Didn't you want to sit in the seat?"

"Don't you remember?"

"Remember what?"

Jody considered changing his mind about going. Something was wrong, but what? Suddenly, it was too late to reconsider because Ant was already lifting Jody out of his chair. This time Ant strapped Jody into the backseat. Jody guessed he wanted Jen to sit in the front.

"So Jen can see where we're going," Ant said.

Then he drove down Moran towards the Ford Freeway. When he turned on to Interstate 94, instead of taking the exit to I 75 North, he turned on to I 75 South, but neither Jody nor Jen were used to travel, and had no idea he'd turned in the wrong direction.

Now Jody was seriously worried. First Ant was late and now he doesn't remember what he said about holding me up in my chair. They had both laughed at the silly image. Why isn't he laughing now?

Jody couldn't speak without his chair. Something felt wrong, but what? He was beginning to feel fear in his guts, a real fear.

"When are we going to get there? Seems like we've been driving a long time." Jen said.

Suddenly, Jody realized that it was true, they had been driving too long. They should have been at the show by now. He felt his fear blow up into an explosion. He had to do something quick, but what? He decided to do what he'd promised he never would, invade someone else's mind. That is, if he could.

Jody sent invisible tendrils from his own mind into Ant's. He reached in and tried to look around, to grab hold of something that would prove his fears wrong. He couldn't. He was blocked completely from entering Ant's mind. There was only one possible reason why Ant's mind was blocked. Jody's mental thoughts froze. It is not Ant. Only Lucian could use a powerful block. Jody shivered in his fear and listened to Jen's happy prattle from the front seat because she was still unaware of the danger.

The car suddenly swerved off the road and Ant turned around in the seat and smiled.

"I wonder what was tickling the back of my head?" He smiled at Jody. "Oh, I forgot, you can't answer, can you? Poor Jody."

What did Lucian do to Ant? Jody wondered, then he thought he knew. Before he could think about it more, he felt Lucian's huge, muscled hand punch him in the side of the head. Then Lucian took a hypodermic out of his pocket and gave Jody a jolt with it.

"Just in case you get ideas." Lucian laughed and Jody's mind squeezed shut at the pounding that was now inside his mind instead of out.

That feat accomplished, Lucian turned to Jennifer and smiled at her first scream. He put his hand over her mouth, reached into the glove compartment for the masking tape and taped her mouth until she was quiet. He taped her hands too.

"This time you will not escape, not unless Jody does the work I have set out for him to do. Only then will I set you free. Now I am going to put you into the trunk and

you better hope Jody does the work fast before you run out of air. I figure you will have about twelve hours of air and it will take us twelve to get there. Are you listening Jody? Remember that. Twelve hours of air.”

He grabbed Jen and shoved her into the trunk of the Chevy and slammed the lid.

Then he went and shook Jody, until he opened his eyes.

“Blink if you heard my warning. Remember twelve hours, that’s all, then she will die.”

Jody blinked through the head pain as best he could.

Lucian said, “We don’t have much time. Is that clear? I know you can’t speak without your chair. It is still in the trunk with Jen. That’s all you need to think about.

Jody woke up groggy and dizzy. He felt loaded down and heavy. Something was making his head feel thudding and dull. With my thoughts slowed down as if they are padded in cotton, I can’t help Jen or do anything to the car. He suddenly imagined all the things he could do if his mind were normal, like choke Lucian’s neck till dead, or lift Jen out of the car and put her into another one. That would be cute. Or maybe I could kill the engine, but I don’t know much about cars. None of it will work because I can’t use my telekinesis. He has me fogged up. Need to do something. He noticed a green freeway sign that read I-75 South. At least I know what direction we are going in.

He decided his best bet would be to concentrate real hard on Uncle Louie. Help, help, he thought at him and began to repeat it over and over. Probably his mind was too dense to get through to him. People who don’t believe in ESP keep their minds dull and blank. Besides, he had never tried to speak to anyone mind to mind before, except with hate at Lucian. Next he tried Ant. What if he is dead? No, I refuse to accept that. I’ll keep trying to send.

He suddenly got an idea that he might be able to use something less invasive than speech. Instead of sending words, I’ll send a telephone ring. Something like that might force Uncle Louie to take notice .

Jody squeezed his foggy mind into the shape of a phone off the hook. At first, it took great effort, but he kept trying. He turned the simple sound on in his mind and aimed a string of rings and beeps to both Uncle Louie and Ant. He sent it over and over in a steady stream north. He pictured his Uncle Louie in his mind and visually watched the rings and beeps ping into his ears. Might work. He realized that because what he was doing something was simple, he could keep it up for a very long time, dizzy or not and without effort. Surly Uncle Louie will notice? He’ll be nerved up as soon as he learns we are missing, then he’ll hear it the beeps, I am sure.

After driving awhile Lucian realized his mistake of putting Jennifer in the trunk next to Jody’s computer. She was tied up but you never know. Better get her where I can keep an eye on her. He pulled off the road so he could change her position. It was dark now and the exits roads here in the country had infrequent cars. He’d wait until it was clear and get her out. Can always put her back in again when we get there.

Jody felt the car pull over and stop. He wanted to ask Lucian how Jennifer was and what his job was supposed to be but he was unable to communicate because his chair and computer were still in the trunk. Somehow, I need to use my mind to push through

that blank wall that is Lucian and talk to him. The thought of talking to Lucian, mind to mind, made him cringe. Instead, he wanted to reach out to strangle him. He imagined putting invisible fingers around Lucian's neck and squeezing. Tried that, didn't work. Then he lost the thought as the car swerved and made him dizzy again.

He learned how Jen was soon enough. Lucian had pulled her out of the trunk, and sat her back in the front seat. Her eyes were open and Jody was thankful for that. It meant she was ok. Then Lucian pulled an overcoat from the trunk and covered her with it to her shoulders.

"If you make a sound, you know Jody will be in trouble, don't you?"

Jennifer nodded and Lucian pulled the tape off her mouth gently so it wouldn't hurt. This gave Jody hope that they might come out of this alive.

"Jody, listen to me. I only need you for one job. Then you both can go free. You hear that?" And I will be free too, he thought, but didn't say.

Jen looked as if she might make a comment, but Lucian said, "No, don't." She didn't.

Jody kept swooning in and out of consciousness but whenever he could wrap his mind around the need to send the telephone rings and beeps, he did. Surly Uncle Louie will notice. He decided to make it more interesting and began sending the sounds in Morse code, and sent beep-beep-beep, ping-ping-ping, beep-beep-beep over and over.

Zee was frantic. She was determined to help Jody get his message to someone. When he dozed too deeply she tried to nudge him awake again and if that didn't work, she whispered into his hear.

"Jody, Jody." He blinked once and closed his eyes once more.

She seemed to get through to him for a slight moment, perhaps because he was drugged and he had less inhibitions. He had been fighting his ability to hear her voice since the hospital, but she knew that he could hear her if he tried. So far, he was still wrapped in a refusal stance. She tried again.

"Jody, its Zee. Remember me?"

He blinked again, but she didn't know if he heard. "Keep sending," she whispered again into his ear. Then she spoke into his mind in case he wasn't picking her words up. *"Keep sending the telephone rings."*

27 10/7/04 Meyers finally gets Jody's signal-meets Ant

Ant felt rough sticks and a rock scratch across the side of his face as he moved his head then heard a roaring fountain of water rush through his brain. It kept pounding and splitting apart then running again. He lifted his head and it got worse, much worse but the pain punched him awake. He opened his eyes and found himself on the ground behind tall bushes that lined his apartment complex. And then he remembered, but what he remembered was impossible because he remembered seeing himself. When he was able to sit up he called out to a young kid walking down the sidewalk.

"Hey, you there, help"

The kid hesitated and was about to walk around him but seemed to think better of it. He walked over and stood looking down at Ant.

"I've been hit on the head." Please, call the police."

"Ah, you can use my phone for a dollar."

Ant pulled a few dollars out of his pocket and the kid handed him the phone.

Ant hesitated for a minute, then instead of dialing 911, he dialed information to get the number of the Seventh Precinct. Call Meyers direct if you want quick results.

The officer on the desk said that Meyers wasn't around but they'd take down the information.

"Tell Meyers. His kid's in serious danger."

"He don't have a kid."

"Jody."

"Oh, yah. What kind of danger?"

"I am his nurse. I've been hit on the head. Bleeding." Ant shivered as he remembered seeing his own face looking back at him. "Kidnap, I think."

The word kidnap perked up Mike's interest, "Where are you? We'll send a car right away."

The police car arrived within minutes. They had been cruising the next block, but couldn't understand Ant who was talking to fast. He kept insisting that they call Meyers.

"I don't know, can't call the detective if its some kind of nut."

"Kidnapped Jody. Tell Meyers."

"Better do it, Mac."

The short cop, who hated to be called Mac, dialed the precinct to get Meyer's home number. It turned out that he'd have been very sorry if he hadn't called. They drove Ant to the Seventh Precinct to meet with Meyers.

Meyers hit his ear with his left hand. Damn cold must have lingered and effected my hearing was what he thought. Now he could hear it in both ears as he was getting out of the shower. He dried his ears as well as he could with the towel then went downstairs to find the q-tips. Need to stop this damn beep or buzz or what ever it is and hurry back to Jody's house and talk to him about the fire.

He was opening the kitchen drawers searching when the phone rang. The life of a policeman. He considered not answering. Oh, what the hell. He picked up the phone and heard Sergeant Stevens talking loud to drown out some other speaker in the background.

"Sorry to bother you sir, but this man, Ant, says that Jody is in danger."

"Put him on."

"Jody's in danger. Some guy, looked just like me, almost killed me. I was on my way to go to Jody's house. He took my car—"

Meyers cut the string of words off, "I'll be right there. Put Stevens back on." Meyers wanted to scream, but said in an even voice, "Stevens, get a description of the car and license number," before slamming down the phone and dialing Jody's phone. He didn't expect an answer and didn't get one. Next he tried the home phone. It rang three then four times before Jody's mother answered.

"Where is Jody?"

"Ain't he answering his own phone?"

"Check where he is immediately. I'll wait." Meyers didn't ask about Jen. No sense getting into a double panic, yet.

"Not here. Kinda strange?"

Meyers gulped down a swallow of fear and asked if Jennifer was home. He could hear over the phone Mrs. Boyd calling upstairs to Jennifer. Her voice faded away as she walked up the stairs calling. "Jennifer, Jen"

Impatient Meyers hung up and called to the police car keeping watch on Jody's house.

"Davison here."

"I just had a report that Jody is not inside the house at this time. Is that right?"

"Yes. They left in a red Chevy with the nurse who takes care of Jody. I checked his credentials real good like you told me to do."

Meyers suddenly rubbed his ear to get the buzzing out. "Didn't hear you real good. Who left?"

"Jody and his sister with Jody's nurse."

"Call the station and give any information you can about the car's description."

Meyers threw the towel on the floor and grabbed his pants and shirt that was draped over chair. He knew if he didn't keep his cool, he'd panic. Damn ears were buzzing and nerves wanted to bounce. He took a deep breath before going out the door. Stay cool, only cool gets things done. He'd learned that lesson long ago.

But this is Jody. An image of Jody and his frail, little boy body ran through his mind. He cut that image off and an image of Jennifer and her small, pretty face beneath golden hair replaced it. Stay calm, he demanded of himself as he drove south the short distance to the seventh precinct, don't loose it. At least the buzzing in his ears stopped when he turned into the parking lot.

At the station, Meyers confronted Ant who was babbling about some kind of twin, or double and rubbing at his left ear where blood had trickled down from his scalp.

"Looked just like me. I swear, like I was standing in front of a mirror. Just like me."

It was hard to listen to the ranting because Meyers was trying to keep his own mind calm.

"Anthony." He said with as stern a voice as loud as he could. "Listen up! Now! I want you to tell me exactly what happened."

"You won't believe it, but the guy looked just like me. I swear on a stack of bibles. He was me and then he hit me on the head. It still hurts like hell. I think he might have killed me, but he seemed in a hurry. Fucker was wearing my green shirt too."

"Slow down and take it from the beginning."

"I was on my way to take care of Jody. I get there at 6:00 every day...."

Meyers listened in silence to Ant's statement that took less than a minute to tell, but his nerves were crawling with such a jungle mix of emotions that he wanted to scream for him to hurry. Also, his ears had began the damn beeping again.

"Son, I believe you. Ok?" And he did. If Lucian could look like Rock, then he could look like Anthony too. Never mind how, just accept it as fact. It is all my fault, Meyers thought, I let him get away the first time.

"That's why I think Jody is in trouble." Anthony ended.

"Yes," Meyers agreed, "Very serious trouble, I am afraid."

"And I keep getting this stupid phone ringing in my ear. From the punch?"

"Maybe you should check into the hospital."

"No. Don't want to do that, just got a headache, and this stupid beeping is driving me crazy."

"Both ears," Meyers asked, "Is the ringing sound in both ears?"

"Yeah. How'd you know?"

"Because my ears are ringing too, like a telephone."

"Yah, you didn't get hit on the head."

"It stopped in the parking lot. Back again now."

"It starts and stops?"

"Yes!" Meyers shouted excited and rising up from the chair. "Its some kind of signal? From Jody! Jody trying to contact us."

"By buzzing our ears?"

"That kid can do things other people never heard of."

Ant remembered Jody flying the paper around the room, "Yah, I know what you mean."

"And it stopped completely when I turned into the parking lot here. Need to try an experiment."

"Come on Ant, you up to following your ears?"

"Sure, Mr. Meyers," Ant grinned. "I like Jody and Jen. Help all I can."

"Then lets go. He advised the station that they had a kidnapping on their hands and to call in more help and stay alert, may need back-up. "May need the whole damn force before this is done."

He pulled Ant off the chair and said, "Lets get going. You're coming with me. This buzzing in our ears may give us the direction we need."

As soon as Meyers drove out of the parking lot and turned onto Mack, then south towards downtown on Gratiot the buzzing got louder.

"It's like someone is shouting in my ear. Mr. Meyers, it just got louder."

"Yes, son. I heard it too. South it is. Let me drop you off first."

"Oh, no. I ain't going nowhere. Not if we're going after Jody. Besides you might need my ears." Ant grinned.

"You might be right." Meyers said as he swung onto Interstate 75, following the rings and beeps in his ears. "Damned if it don't sound like Morse code."

"Yah, you're right" Ant said with an amazed grin. "And all we got to do is follow."

Meyers alerted other stations as he crossed the state line, but continued to follow the sound of rings and beeps into Ohio which was where The State Police found Anthony's car. Meyers knew that Lucian was no dummy and ditched it before they could tail him, but Jody's mental telephone beeps kept pulling him South so Meyers assumed that Lucian had grabbed another car and continued driving in the same direction.

You don't know it Lucian, but we are coming after you. Meyers prayed with all the power he had in him that Jody could keep sending the signals. The buzzing did quit a few times, but both he and Anthony picked it back up at the same time. Meyers speculated that Jody could be trying to contact him specifically, and then anyone he knew in some kind of wide broadcast configuration. He smiled as he imagined the whole city of Detroit going mad because of ringing in their ears. The smile didn't erase the tickle of fear though. What if the rings stopped and didn't start up again?

Since learning about Jody's telekinesis ability he had thought about what other abilities Jody might have. But he'd never asked. The subject was embarrassing for both of them, almost as bad as the subject of sex, he mused. Maybe, I'd better change my attitude. Oh, God I hope it isn't too late and I can save Jody and Jennifer. So far, their young lives have had more danger than many adults over eighty. He didn't know if they could take any more. Don't know if I can.

Chapter 27

In Cincinnati, Ohio, Lucian bought some fast food, drove south from town and pulled into the next rest stop. The travel trailer he'd stolen wouldn't be noticed in a rest stop. He untapped Jennifer's wrists and led her to the back where Jody lay tied, for his own safety, to a padded bench. He was unable to move without his chair which stood leaning in the corner with its phone smashed. Should have thought of that earlier.

Jennifer tried to get Jody to eat, but he still seemed too groggy. He did sip the pop she held for him, but then Lucian gave him another shot and he went back into his simi-stupor. Jennifer was worried.

"What are you doing to him?"

"It's nothing dangerous. Just keeps his mind quiet."

"But he didn't eat. He needs to eat."

"He'll eat when we get there."

"Please tell me where we are going."

"Won't do you much good. New Madrid, if you must know. Never heard of it, did you?"

She shook her head. "No."

"Well, it's a town where there was a large earthquake once. Going to be another one real soon. That's where we're going. Now you know."

He let Jennifer get Jody cushioned and comfortable before he retied him and then tied her wrists, and ankles. He lay her on the other padded bench and lay down on the floor.

"All of us are taking an hour rest." He announced. "Sleep while you can."

Zee watched as Lucian lay down on the floor. Now she knew where they were going but not why. That information needs to get to Meyers, she thought, but he was so hard headed she didn't think he would listen to her angel voice. There is nothing else I can do. Untying the kids is out of the question. All I can give them is a hug, which she did. She watched with worry as Jody's head rolled back and forth for a minute and then lay still. He must be over drugged.

She went to Jennifer and hugged her with her ghostly arms and kissed her cheek. Jennifer seemed to look right at her. Zee watched the confusion on Jennifer's face slowly grow into a smile.

"Yes, its Zee. If you can hear me, nod." Zee bypassed Jennifer's ears and spoke directly into her mind.

Zee was delighted when Jennifer gave her a slow nod. "Wonderful."

"Can you help us?" Jennifer thought to Zee.

"I'll help all I can. Don't worry."

"We're going to New Madrid." Jennifer thought at Zee.

"I know I was listening. I need to go."

"Don't leave."

"I need to try and tell your Uncle Louie where you're going. I'll come back quick. I promise."

Jennifer smiled her agreement and closed her eyes. Zee could see that the stress had made her tired. *"Sleep my child. Sleep."*

The buzzing stopped in both Meyers' ears and Anthony's. Meyers panicked for a moment, but then he thought about how bone tired he was from driving more than six hours straight. It was his hope that Lucian was tired too. That either Jody went to sleep or Lucian had stopped for a longer rest than usual. During the drive he could hear the low ringing sounds speed up or get louder at times and assumed that Jody was experiencing change.

Surly Lucian made pit stops so they could relieve themselves. The fact that he hadn't killed them must mean that he needs Jody for something. Probably something to do with Jody's mental power. Meyers questioned if Jody could be cooperating and that's why the signal ended. At a threat to Jen, Jody would do anything, and I don't blame him. Wish I knew what was going on. Any damn thing is possible. Guess I am lucky to know as much as I do.

"If Lucian hadn't changed cars we'd have had him by now." he told Anthony who was still sitting on the right side. He had dozed off a few times but now he was alert.

"The buzzing stopped in my ears." His face showed his fear.

Meyers hoped his own didn't. "I suspect they stopped to rest for a while and Jody is sleeping. Might have a ways to go yet. Wish the hell I knew where they were going. We might as well stop too. Both men got out of the car at the next rest stop to stretch their legs. Meyers didn't admit it but his legs were shaking for more reasons than one. This is my family that monster is playing with, well, adopted family. If anything happens to them I couldn't stand it.

He was standing at the vending machine getting a cup of coffee when a medium tall stranger in a worn and frayed dark coat, with a dark Mediterranean complexion and kindly blue eyes that seemed to have lights behind them walked up to where he was standing.

"Got a stack of interesting tourist maps on the rack in back of you. Ought to take a look."

Meyers glared at the stranger, hardly seeing him.

"No thank you."

He grabbed his coffee and started to walk out the swinging door.

"Here let me give you a few maps. They're free." The man held out five maps.

"I said, no thanks."

"But I insist."

Meyers looked at the stranger as if he were a nut case, but took the maps to please him. He ran into a lot of nuts and was used to them. But something about this man rang a bell. He blinked his eyes and shook his head, then turned and huffed to the car and sat his coffee in the holder. When he looked back, he saw Anthony talking to the same stranger. Anthony took a handful of maps too and walked back to the car.

Strange, Meyers thought, but that man looked familiar. Can't place him though. He turned the ignition key as Anthony opened the door and sat down with his pile of maps. Then it suddenly hit Meyers where he'd seen the stranger before.

"Smith!" he said out loud. "Yes, Mr. Smith." That's what Zee called him.

He jumped out of the car while it was still running and ran back into the rest area. Empty. He checked in the bathroom. Someone could be inside a stall, so he waited outside near the front door for ten minutes. People came in and out but no Mr. Smith. Damn. Maybe I was mistaken.

Finally he gave up and joined Ant back in the car. Let me take a look at those tourist maps, might be something there. Meyers held up the maps. Both sets were duplicates. There were five different maps in all: Sea World in Columbus Ohio, New Madrid a famous earthquake fault near the Mississippi River, The St Louis Arch, Cumberland Gap, and Mammoth Caves Kentucky. They were already past Sea World; the other destinations were south and west of their present location. Did it mean something? Can't have police stake out all these areas, even one would be difficult. Flimsy evidence anyway. He put the maps up on the dash and suggested they sit back and try to nap for a half hour.

"Probably what Jody is doing." He told Ant again as if to assure himself too.

When he woke up Lucian led Jennifer back to the front of the trailer. Separated, they both stayed worried about each other. This worked to his advantage. In the cab, he tapped her wrists back together and hesitated about taping her mouth. Someone might see the tape through the window and to tell the truth he didn't mind talking to her. He kind of liked her prattle, but she was able to scream too. A good warning should prevent that. The warning was in the form of a steady glare. She picked up his meaning right away and kept silent as he drove.

27b

Jennifer didn't feel terrified out of her mind as she sat in the front of the trailer next to Lucian. Scared, but not terrified. Zee had come back to be with her like she promised. Jennifer had fun talking with her. Jennifer giggled and Lucian looked over at her puzzled. She stopped smiling but kept up her thoughts with Zee.

"I tried to talk to Jody again, but he is sleeping now. I won't bother him again for a while. Agreed?" Zee asked her.

Jen nodded. *"As long as I know he is ok. That's all that matters."*

"We are trying to help you."

"We?"

"Mr. Smith. He is helping too."

"Oh, yes, I liked Mr. Smith." Jennifer nodded. *"I really did."*

"We all do."

"He's special, isn't he."

"He certainly is."

Sometimes Jennifer could almost see an outline of Zee and she smiled because it was so silly.

"Why couldn't I see you before?"

"Sometimes stress can sharpen a person's psychic ability."

"Guess it did mine. What's heaven like?"

"Well, for the moment, I am not in it."

"You know what I mean."

"Yes, I do, but I am not sure if I can describe it."

"Why not?"

"It is like earth, but everything is pure and all the times are represented at once. I can see earth if I want to from heaven. That is why I came."

"How come no one ever talks about people from heaven."

"They do, but very few people can see and hear us."

"I can."

"I know." Pleased Zee reached down and gave Jennifer a hug. *"Your psyche jumped into high gear."*

"Will I always be able to see you?"

"I don't know."

Lucian looked hard at Jennifer again. He reached over and gave her a nudge as if he knew she was talking to someone. Jennifer quit talking to Zee.

Suddenly, Lucian reached over once more and yanked the gold cross off her neck. He let it drop into his shirt pocket and said, "I'll give it back later."

Jennifer couldn't help it and cried. It hurt. She loved the cross Zee had given her. She sniffled in her tears. Don't cry. Don't let him see me hurt. But she felt hurt and angry and lost.

Zee spoke up again. *"Don't worry little Jen. It will work out. Remember Mr. Smith? He is going to help."*

Jennifer nodded and sniffled.

She remembered Mr. Smith. He was Zee's friend and visited Jody once. He changed Jody that time because Jody was getting into trouble. She could tell. She

remembered when Mr. Smith warned Jody that “Murders go to jail” and she would never forget those words and the look on Jody’s face. Course he never killed anyone so he didn’t go to jail. But something happened when Lucian kidnapped her the last time. That was when Mr. Smith asked her if she wanted to live so she could stay with Jody. The smile on Mr. Smith’s face and the rainbow that surrounded both of them as they stood halfway to heaven was a moment she would never forget as long as she lived.

Once again she visualized herself floating down from the clouds beneath the sunshine and blue sky when Mr. Smith said, “It is your choice.” Then Mr. Smith wrapped her in his soft arms as he reached in and took hold of her heart with a huge gentle hand and held it in one stopped, everlasting moment of time. She thought she remembered his words too.

“Jen, isn’t that what Jody calls you? He calls you Jen. Love is all around you. You are a butterfly perched on a flower or a moth flying close a flame. It is your choice. You can choose to stay or go. Jody still needs you. Do you want to stay and help him? Do you want to stay here a little longer, Jennifer?”

Then he gave her heart a quick, tight squeeze that sent the blood of life flowing through the heart’s chambers once more, pumping and pulsing and beating in a steady rhythm, a dying ember come alive once more. He kissed her on the cheek before he let me go.

Jennifer sighed at the memory. He will help this time too, I know he will.

She looked over at Lucian who was driving and fretting. Jennifer crunched her face up into a mean look and thought at him. You’re going to get what is coming to you, you ugly man. You can’t go around hurting people. You’ll see.

Chapter 27C

Zee knew that Jody was getting through to Meyers most of the time even though Lucian kept him doped up with shots of medication. She had fond memories of Meyers and believed in his ability to save Jody and Jennifer. Somehow she had to get him the help he needed.

Zee whispered into Jennifer's ear. "I am going to try to talk to your Uncle Louie again. If you don't mind me leaving for a short while, blink."

Jennifer did blink.

This kid is tough. "I love you." Zee whispered and left.

Well there is one advantage to being a ghost, I can travel in a split second to anyplace I need to go. Before she went to Meyers she tried Jody again. Was he actually sleeping this time? No sense trying to wake him. She wasn't sure if she'd gotten through the last time. She just wanted him to know that it was working, that his Uncle Louie was following them. She gave him a ghostly kiss on the cheek before she left.

She arrived in Meyers car just as he was pulling out of the rest stop.

She whispered into Meyers ear, "It's me, Zee."

Meyers reached up and itched his right ear. "Maybe the buzzing is starting again. I think I almost heard it."

"I didn't, Ant said. "Think we'll hear Jody again?"

"We damn well better." He phoned the station and told them he had just left a rest stop south of Cincinnati and rubbed his left ear this time. Then he felt his brain itch. Strangest thing and now I got a buzzing in my head. "Maps, maps what about the damn maps?"

"I didn't say anything."

"Thought you said something about maps."

"No. But if this stupid map doesn't stop skidding off the dash I am going to throw it out the window. Almost fell into my coffee. Ant shoved it back onto the dash. It refused to rest and slid off again from under clipboard he'd set on top of it.

"Damn, it fell again."

"What?"

"That map."

"Map? Which one."

"New Madrid. That earthquake place. In Missouri someplace."

"That's way off to the west. So far as I know we are still traveling south.

It was just then that the buzzing started up in both their ears.

"Yep, South it is."

But after a half hour driving they began to verge southwest on I 71 and the next hour took them off I 71 on to I 64. Meyers had had to back track when the buzzing stopped very suddenly right at an intersection. Within a minute of turning west the buzzing was back again in full force. Meyers felt great relief at the consistent, loud rings and beeps in his ears.

It was almost as if Jody could see them following. Meyers dearly hoped he could. Please God, keep them safe. This from a man who hardly cared if God existed before tonight, but he said it again for the thousandth time this night, please God.

Then, suddenly, he knew. He slid the car over on to the loose stones of the shoulder and jerked to a stop.

"Give me that map."

"The one sticking out of my coffee."

"Yes," Meyers laughed, "That one."

It was more of an advertising gimmick than a map Meyers saw about a city called New Madrid. Meyers took five minutes as he sat there and read the information on the front of the pamphlet and map. Earthquake zone. Why would Lucian need an earthquake zone?

"What do you think happens during an earthquake, Ant?"

"The ground shakes, fissures open up, and people die."

"Why would Lucian go to an earthquake zone?" Meyers asked into the air. "Why?"

"Things fall into cracks in an earthquake. He wants to jump in?"

Meyers looked over at Ant. "The ground opens up a lot doesn't it?"

"Studied emergency aid the summer I spent in California. Yah, big cracks. If you dropped a bomb into one it'd drop down real far. Make a another quake."

"Bomb?"

"Sure, its been studied. You know, to prevent terrorists from doing it."

"Can't think of how a bomb would serve Lucian. I know little about him, but from what I can surmise, his main interest is Jody's mental ability. It serves his purpose somehow."

"You told me he was after Jody, but not why."

"Hell, I wish I knew why."

"If something can go down, maybe something can come up too." Ant said.

Meyers looked at Ant, puzzled.

"I mean, like a treasure or something." Ant said.

Meyers completed the idea for him, "If you shake up the earth then you could get it out. Jody could lift this treasure out of the earth for Lucian? Makes sense to me, but why not just dig a hole with a back hoe?"

Ant shook his head.

All the speculation wasn't enough help for Meyers. He needed real information, facts he could call in to the station. For now he could only continue following behind Jody, and be thankful that I can.

Chapter 27D

Lucian only knew the name of the town he was supposed to go to, not exactly where. He knew that he'd get more directions from the Entity after he arrived at the town. He didn't want that because he could remember the pain from his last encounter. He knew New Madrid was famous for earthquakes and could guess how that figured into the Entity's plans.

At one time a couple of hundred years ago an earthquake at that spot had actually turned the Mississippi back on itself, its course changed forever after. The town had become a famous tourist spot which would be a plus because no one would notice them in a crowd.

He was proud of himself for pulling the kidnapping off so smoothly. No one knew where they were headed, but himself. They probably had noticed that Jody was missing by now and Jennifer too, but they wouldn't have any idea where to look. Of that Lucian was sure. Unless, he thought, Anthony isn't dead. He'd been in too big a hurry to check. No matter, I've ditched his red car anyway.

If I were any kind of real father, he mused, I would be proud of my son for his ability. But I gave it all to him with the medicine while he was still in the womb. He owes me his life. Yes, gave him a good ole shot in the dupa. It's a shame that he's the only one of the experiments who turned out well. The others are not nearly as gifted as Jody. If I had time, I could have pulled a few in for this job, but they were in too many different countries to get here. Red Eyes couldn't wait. Would have been nice, seeing all the crippled children sitting around a crack in the ground. What a sight.

Well, it will be a sight with only Jody and myself, won't it. The Entity should pat me on the back instead of driveling all the time with hate and hurry. I even think I have arrived earlier than he planned.

He noticed the turn off and swerved over onto the I-55 exit to New Madrid. Should be a few points for being early. Then he remembered Red Eye's last visit and decided he didn't want any points, just get the job done and be rid of it. That's all I need to do. He was a part of the being that called itself Entity, and knew it, but that didn't stop him from knowing fear. Like someone who mutilates his own nose and is aware of the knife coming towards the face. He heard Jennifer kick the dash and told her to stop.

"Don't matter what you need. If you need to pee you'll wait until we get there. Both of you. Within the next half hour" He needed to relieve himself too, but it could wait a few more minutes.

Just outside of town, he did stop at a gas station for a fill-up and the bathroom. The station was almost empty and the restrooms were off to the side which made it easy for him to carry both of the kids inside; both together didn't weight more than a bag of potatoes. He set the kids down on the tiled floor facing away while he relieved himself. When he un-tapped Jennifer's hands he put tape on her mouth and warned her to be quiet. She obeyed. Jody shook his head. He didn't need to go. He wore a catheter bag and Lucian emptied it with a grimace.

When he had Jody stashed back into the trailer, and Jennifer back on the front seat, he searched his map for an out of the way corner in which to park until Red Eyes gave him further directions. Any place would do as long as the cops didn't come asking

questions. Even so, a little hypnotism could take care of their curiosity. He chuckled his grating laugh as he drove away.

Jennifer realized that she was the only one who could move and it was up to her if anyone were to leave a clue. It probably wouldn't work but it was worth a try, that is, if she didn't get caught. Lucian checked the bathroom to make sure before they left that they didn't leave anything behind, but just before he re-tapped her hands and feet and slung her up to carry her back into the car, she threw a wad of hair she had pulled from her head on to the floor near the toilet. She had been planning on throwing the cross, but Lucian had taken it. Hair was all she had left that could signal Uncle Louie.

Lucian didn't notice the hair as he turned off the light but Jennifer saw that it still lay near the toilet and hoped her Uncle Louie would see it. Hopeless she knew, but he was a smart man, smarter than Lucian, and if anyone could find them, he could.

She felt like crying when she thought of Uncle Louie. She wanted to be home and comfortable in her own bed. but she didn't cry. Jody had to do a job and then they could go home. Lucian had promised. A nagging worry filled her heart about that, but she didn't want to think any further. She looked up at Jody sitting in the back seat, he was acting very tired and dizzy, that worried her too, but she was glad she could see him.

28- Lucian stops

Lucian was in the right town, but he didn't know exactly what he should do now or where he was going to do it. He dreaded the meeting with the Entity again, but it was necessary before he could continue. All he knew for sure was that he and Jody together were to lift the ship out of the ground at the precise moment it was shaken loose. He hadn't been told how it was going to be shook loose, but because they were sitting on top of an earthquake zone, it was easy to figure out. Though, what would cause the earthquake, he didn't know.

He was sure the Entity had helpers all over the globe who worked for him. Lucian, himself, had controlled a number of them at various times, but currently he'd been too busy with this project. It also could be that an earthquake is predicted to happen at this time. For some reason the Entity had insisted that they get here during this week. Wait and see, was all he could do, and take care of two brats until he didn't need them any more.

He forced both Jennifer and Jody to eat. Jody was easy, just shove the food down his throat. He had to swallow, but Jennifer didn't like Lucian doing that to Jody so she fed him herself while Lucian watched. Lucian didn't dare allow Jody's mind to clear up until he needed him to help lift the ship. By then, he'd hide Jennifer away as ransom. Jody would do anything to keep Jennifer safe.

After they ate and cleaned up in the bathroom facilities that were available in the trailer park, he laid both Jen and Jody down so they could rest with another shot for Jody, just to be safe. He intended to sleep on the floor. It would be good enough because he suspected that the Entity would come to visit and he didn't want to be too deeply asleep when he did.

Already, as tired as he was, his nerves were jumbled up just knowing that he would get a visit. It had always been like this. Red Eyes needed a class in human etiquette. Well, so do I. He laughed at his own joke. With one more last check on Jennifer and Jody to make sure they really were asleep, he dosed off himself, but not for long.

The Entity checked over the situation of his diamond ship once more and didn't like what he saw. Worse than I thought. Good thing the earthquake is set to go off soon. He had arraigned for his munitions expert to place the bomb near the weakest area of the fault. His expert had studied all the probability mechanics until it was no longer just a possibility, but a certainty. His expert knew exactly how the bomb would effect the place where the small ship lay, twenty feet below the bottom of the Mississippi River just north of the town.

The Entity had early on thought to get the super powers to throw a few bombs at the area, but failing that, he decided to arrange his own large quake. Small ones occurred all the time here, but they hadn't moved his ship. He needed a quake big enough to move the ship from between the sandwich it was now squeezed into like a lump of pickle. Movement of one or two feet would slide it off the lip to begin its drop. That is when Lucian and Jody would need to do the lift. Exactly at that moment or the ship would keep sliding down into boiling lava. The Entity knew it wouldn't last long in a river of lava. Already, the numerous cracks were widening in the diamond shell. Worse each time he looked.

The timing had to be perfect and was. The full moon's influence on the tides and the seismic rumbles insured that the area was ready, and quite unstable. Now was the time to strike. Lucian was in place and only needed to be informed of the exact area in which to stand during the earthquake, about a mile from its epicenter and at least thirty feet from the ship. This was a guess; he hated to guess and usually did not. He knew it would be easier to exert mind power on his ship the closer Lucian and Jody stood; yet, they must stay at a safe distance to continue the lift.

He had not tried anything like this before because for eons the ship had lay buried so far below the surface. Once he had tried to escape by using the ship's own internal engines, but that pushed the ship in deeper. Gradually the earth had shifted moving his ship until it got sandwiched between the two slabs of granite, and stuck there since 1918, as humans named time. Then jammed deep into place by the first major quake.

He dare not let the cracks get too big or the craft would no longer be space worthy. Can't escape into space if you crack up, so the move must be soon. I will now wake up my lieutenant and get him moving.

Lucian's vivid dream turned black, then two red spots formed into the black background as if stabbed into place. When the two red spots began to burn inside his head, Lucian woke up with a start. He could smell something burning as soon as he woke up. His pocket was burning. He jumped to the water glass he'd left nearby and poured it into his pocket. Damn. It was the cross he'd taken off Jennifer yesterday. It had burnt a hole in his pocket then fell to the floor so hot it looked red.

He looked up to see the Entity hovering over him. Very close, too close in this small travel trailer. Lucian felt smothered. He was now choking from the fumes of burnt cloth and the closeness of the Entity. He actually had a single thought of concern for his son Jody at that moment. If the kid woke up and saw this thing, he wouldn't live to do the job. Heart attack, for sure. Lucian almost laughed, but thought he shouldn't.

The Entity huffed out a balloon of hot air before speaking, just for effect.

"There is an old road that leads to the river. A lovers lane during the evening; it will be empty when you get there. Do so before the sun rises."

Lucian began receiving mental pictures in his head as to which road he should take and where they should stand to accomplish the job.

"The explosion will be you're signal to begin. Have you conscripted Jody yet."

"Yes, he will be pliable if I hold the girl in danger."

"I have arraigned for an earth quake shortly before you begin to lift the ship. You must not fail."

Lucian gulped and nodded that he understood.

"You do understand, don't you? Answer me."

"Yes," Lucian stammered.

He watched as Red Eyes shrank back into two glowing pits in the blackness then was gone. Breathing a sigh of relief he opened a bottle of water and drank it down in two gulps. He sat on the chair considering his options. He had none. Jennifer's cross was laying on the floor where it had burnt out of his pocket. He reached over and picked it up. It was tiny in the cup of his large hand. Lucian decided to give it back to her when he

woke her up. He looked at his watch, in four hours. He lay on the floor to rest himself for the big day tomorrow.

Chapter 29 -

Once more they lost Jody's signal; it hadn't come back in a short time like it did before, but Meyers kept driving in the same general direction. It was already 4:30 am in the morning. Meyers surmised that they had stopped to rest. Maybe Jody is asleep. At least, that was his prayer. He reflected that he needed solid evidence so he could call for back up, following a telephone beep in his head wasn't it. But he was sure now that New Madrid was Lucian's destination, for whatever reason. Actually, he liked Ant's suggestion that Lucian wanted to pull up some kind of treasure. It made the most sense of anything they'd thought of so far.

Zee tried to shake Ant up. She reached out, but her arm went right through him. Then she tried to whisper into his ear, but that didn't work either. Meyers was almost to the rest room where Lucian had taken Jody and Jennifer. She had to give up trying to get Ant's attention, he was semi-asleep and refused to listen or wake up. Meyers was so hard nosed and practical she doubted if he would listen to a ghost whisper in his ear. She could sometimes move paper if she put great effort into it, just as she moved the pamphlet for New Madrid, but the motion of the car had made that easier.

Meyers was almost to the rest stop. Frantic now, Zee tickled his cheek. Nothing. The pamphlet was beneath his folder laying on the seat. She knew she couldn't move it. She looked around for something she could move to get his attention.

Then she noticed what he had hanging from his mirror. It was a small gold locket with a rose engraved on one side and a cross on the other, hanging on a thin black cord. Mine! He has my locket! With my picture inside it? How did he get it? No matter. It was light enough that she might be able to move it. Anything to pull at his attention.

Zee began to blow on the tiny locket. When that didn't work, she kept pushing at it. Finally, after much effort, the locket moved in an arc to the right. Had he noticed?

Meyers did see the locket move, but shook his head as if to clear it. Next he checked the windows to see if one was open. None were and he kept on driving.

Zee pushed on the locket again with all her might. This time it moved horizontally against the window. He can't dismiss this.

He didn't. He swung over into the outside lane and when the gas station came into view, he parked in front. She heard him breathe a sigh as if of exasperation and then relief. He had a questioning look on his face.

"Like that man in the rest area. Open your eyes and pay attention." She heard him whisper.

"Yes," she yelled, excited, but she didn't think he heard her.

Then he said in a low voice, "Zee, is that you?" He reached up and held the locket in his hand and looked at it wistfully. "Wish you were here."

"Oh, I am here," she said, "I promise you I am here." Although she could tell he hadn't heard, she thought that maybe he sensed her presence in the car.

Just then Ant looked over from his semi-dose. "Hey, what's up? Who you talking to?"

"No one, I think. Needed to make a pit stop. Want a coffee?"

"Sure, I need to stop too, you go first."

Meyers went into the all night gas station to get the key for the men's restroom.

“Only got one rest room. We’re co-ed here.” the older attendant said. Then laughed.

Meyers didn’t think anything could be funny at 4:30 in the morning.

“Its way around to the side. Don’t forget to give the key back.”

“Won’t.” Meyers said as he took the key and went looking for the single rest room. He wondered if that was legal, but guessed it was as long as only one gender went in at a time. He laughed when he got to the door. It had a silhouette of two paper dolls standing apart, one female and one male. Someone had used lipstick to tie them together. Well, it was sort of funny. He pushed open the door and did his business.

As he bent down, flushing the toilet, he noticed the blond hair on the floor. He hurriedly washed his hands before getting down on his knees with a clean paper towel and lifting the small clump of hair off the floor. Excitement began to curse through his bones. Holding the strands of blond hair closer to the light, he could swear he recognized Jennifer’s color hair. Oh, that must have hurt, to pull out so much hair, but that girl is a tough one.

He ran outside and motioned for Ant. Go into the trunk and get me a plastic evidence envelope. Can’t miss them. In a small box. Then Meyers folded the napkin and put it into his pocket before he went inside the gas station and showed the attendant his badge.

“I don’t have a legal right to question you because I am from Michigan. I will call your own police here if I need to, but I’d like to ask you a few questions about your earlier customers. It’s up to you.”

“Aw, I don’t mind. Didn’t have but a few. Wasn’t a good night at all.”

Meyers asked the attendant, a Mr. Welsh, to describe everyone who used the bathroom during the night. “And, oh I might need to keep your key.”

After Mr. Welsh described a large female wearing a black coat he said there was a young fellow wearing a purple shirt, red hair and freckles.

Just then Ant came into the gas station carrying a plastic envelope.

“That’s him! Mr. Welsh yelled. “That’s him for sure.”

A big grin grew to cover Meyer’s face.

Mr. Welsh looked at him, “That’s good?”

“Mr. Welsh, you don’t know how good.”

By this time Ant had figured out what was happening and he grinned too.

“Please,” Meyers asked, “Can you tell me which way he headed when he left here?”

“Oh, I get it. Must be a twin you’re all looking for.” He rubbed his brow. “Let me see. I think I remember lights turning around and heading towards town. Course it was hard to tell because they was on a big camper trailer with red tail lights in back and direction lights in front too.

“I need to use your phone. Do you mind. I’ll reverse the charges.” Meyers asked. While Ant said, “Music to my ears. By the way, here is the evidence envelope, and I could use that key now.”

“Can’t.” Meyers stated from the phone. “Need it for evidence.”

“You won’t be the first to go out back” Mr. Welsh whispered, and Ant did.

Meyers called the Seventh Precinct in Detroit and had them call the State police for this area. Trouble was he didn't want to wait. He wanted to keep following Jody. But Jody had been silent for a long while now. It would be dawn in a few hours.

"You hear any rings or beeps yet? He asked Ant.

Ant shook his head in the negative.

"Then we might as well have a chitchat with the State police."

He put the blond hair into the plastic envelope and sealed it tight. "With Mr. Welsh identifying you, don't need any more evidence that we are on the right track."

"Yah, I'd say that sews it up pretty good." Ant said and grinned again. "We're close now, don't you think?"

Chapter 30

Jody woke up and couldn't easily shake his feeling of confusion, Lucian still looked like Ant and he still found it disconcerting that his aid had become his enemy. Not really, but it looked so much like Ant. Plus his mind felt heavy with sleep. He was surprised that he'd actually slept under such circumstances.

Then he panicked. The signal. I haven't been sending it. He tried to clear his mind. Suddenly Lucian in the body of Ant was there with another shot. What ever it was, it kept him from using his telekinesis. Course, if he could have, one of them would be dead.

Usually, for a short time after he got the shot he was unable to focus on sending the beacon, but this time he didn't feel so out of it and began sending right away. He allowed his head to role sideways as Lucian picked him up and put him up front without Jennifer. Where is she? The coming dawn in the sky was a dizzy blur for now and he heard Lucian's voice as if from a far distance.

"Only gave you a small dose this time. Our work awaits. Need your head clear. Blink if you understand."

Jody blinked.

"Now listen. I have put Jennifer in the trailer, inside the table seat. She can't get out and there isn't a lot of air. That means you need to do the job quickly. When the job is done I will let Jennifer out."

Lucian leaned back in the seat and started up the motor. It sputtered. He turned the key again then looked relieved that the truck started.

"We'd be in a damn mess if it didn't. Jennifer will be fine. She is my insurance that you don't use your mental abilities in the wrong direction. I want you know what the consequences would be."

Soon after those words, Jody felt the trailer move off the smooth road onto a very bumpy one that jarred his head until he thought he would scream. He did moan.

Lucian must have noticed because he said, "Can't be helped. Damn ruts." But he seemed to slow down.

"I will put you in your chair as soon as we get where we are going."

Jody hoped this was true. He assumed he would learn about the job he was to do once they got there. Hope my mind can wake up by then, I will need it. With Jennifer held in danger, Jody would need to do what Lucian said, no matter what. His thoughts seemed as shaken as the road just then and he skipped sending a few beeps.

Meyers was feeling impatient waiting for the police and told Ant, "The local people will know the ins and outs of the best places to look." Which gave him an idea. He turned to Mr. Welsh and asked him where the best place would be around here if you wanted to hide. "An old dirt road or something like that."

"There's the old lovers lane that bends round towards the river." Mr. Welsh told him, "But I doubt if some northerner could find his way to it by himself."

"It's that secluded?"

"Yep, not used much any more, deep ruts. Used to be a lover's lane, but the kids just make out the parking lots now a days, right out in the open."

Meyers thought for a moment and then said, "I need you to draw out a map so I can find this place. The twin we're looking for knew where he was going." He didn't add that Lucian wasn't an ordinary man. The idea would have never settled into his own mind before he learned about what Jody could do. It wasn't too far of a jump to realize that his father had special talents too.

"Here you go, mister. About three miles east, to your right. Big sycamore at the turn off. No sign, mind you, just tracks in the grass."

"Thanks."

"Hey, what do I tell the police when they get here?"

"I'll call."

The telephone began to sound in Meyers ears once more. He grabbed the slip of paper from Mr. Welsh gave it a quick glance and told Ant to hurry as he ran out the door.

They didn't drive far before they turned off the highway on to what looked like a tractor path. If it hadn't been for the large tree standing alone next to the path, they would have never found it. The track was bumpy with dried mud in places and Meyers was glad it hadn't rained here recently. It would have been impassable wet. It seemed to wind around to the left towards a copse of woods. Hard to tell at times because it disappeared every once in a while.

Once, both Meyers and Ant had to get out and look for the track on foot. Meyers hoped he was right to come here. All he had to go on was instinct; but, an instinct that had served him well for twenty-five years. Besides they were still following Jody's call, though it was harder to do so now that the sound wasn't coming directly from the south. Meyers stomach churned when he thought about what he might find at the end of that call.

After a long, bumpy ride through trees and deep ruts, the trailer finally stopped in front of a large expanse of water. Jody could see the water from where he sat in the front seat. When Lucian lifted him out of the truck and sat him into his wheel chair he felt so relieved he thought he'd cry. His hated chair felt like a precious jewel this morning. It was his eyes, legs and mouth, without it he had been like dead. He did feel his eyes get wet, but maybe part of that was anger because just then Lucian spoke.

"Remember Jennifer. She has what? Only a few hours of air?"

Jody reached his finger to the on switch for his computer. To his surprise it turned on and his voice came out right away.

"What is it you want me to do?"

"We are waiting for an earthquake. That is when we start our work. We will join minds at the right moment."

"What if the wait takes too long?"

Lucian bent his head as if to shrug, "You mean for Jennifer? You had better hope not."

Jody could feel the steam building up inside from anger. Cool it, he told himself, stay calm. He rolled his chair close to the edge of the lake and looked out at the blue wonder of it. He was sitting next to some trees and thought he heard his name whispered. He shook his head, but heard it again. Slowly he turned in the direction of the sound. There stood Mr. Smith up against the north side of a huge tree where Lucian couldn't see him. He had a smile on his thin, dark face beneath black hair streaked with gray. His blue

eyes seemed to glow. He was wearing a sweater and slacks as if he were a college professor. Jody smiled as Mr. Smith put his hand up in a salute and then motioned an ok sign with his fingers. Next, Jody saw Jennifer come out from behind Mr. Smith and he thought he'd choke in surprise. She had been tied up in the trailer, but now she was standing next to Mr. Smith and smiling. She isn't dead, is she? Did her image waver? Like an illusion?

If Jen is safe then I can go after Lucian. Jody felt like he wanted to kill Lucian. I'll strangle him with invisible hands, hold a pillow against his mouth and nose like he did me once, squeeze his mind into putty. Jody could feel his anger build up into a crescendo of hate. Plus the medicine Lucian gave him was finally wearing off.

He began to turn in his chair to face Lucian, but unexpectedly, a gray sparrow flew down and landed on the arm of his chair. Its tiny gray feet dug into his hand as it's beady, bright eyes looked up at him.

The bird chirped, and Jody's mind heard the words "*Do what he tells you to do.*"

The bird repeated the phrase once again then suddenly flew off towards a willow tree growing near the water. Jody looked back at the trees but Mr. Smith and Jennifer were both gone. Mr. Smith must be the one speaking through the bird?

But Jody wanted to attack Lucian, kill him. His nerves quivered with the need. The bird chirped loudly from the tree on his left.

He shook his head to clear out the furious thoughts that had been gathering. Don't use up your energy on revenge. Remember, Mr. Smith saved Jennifer's life once, he'll do it again. He bottled up his anger and took a gulp and swallowed his anger with his spit. For now, he promised himself, just for now I'll do as Mr. Smith wants. I trust him.

Jody swiftly turned around to check on Lucian and saw that he was still pacing back and forth in front of the trailer, slightly to the left behind Jody. Lucian hadn't heard the bird and didn't know that Mr. Smith had saved Jennifer. Jody closed his eyes and breathed a sigh of relief and a prayer of thanks to God. I promise you God that I won't forget you ever again, but I may need to do something to Lucian when this is all over.

"What is it you will want me to do." Jody suddenly asked Lucian.

"We will both send our mind below the surface of the Mississippi and lift up a small ship that has been down there for a long time. Then we will be done."

"Can we do it?"

"I am sure. Once past the mud the water will help with buoyancy. Just follow my mind as I am directed to the exact place, then help me lift."

"Couldn't you just use a back hoe? Jody asked disgusted.

"They don't easily dig beneath rivers, not without detection."

"Isn't that what the earthquake is for? To open up the river?"

"Yes, and it will work. Enough of this prattle."

Jody agreed. He felt tired and wore out with fear. The medicine Lucian had been giving him seemed to have worn off completely. He closed his eyes in gratitude. Then decided to test his power on a distant object, but while his eyes were still closed he felt the earth tremble. He popped his eyes open as the ground gave another shake and loud roar this time.

The upheaval had been substantial, if he hadn't been sitting in his chair he would have been laying on the ground. Lucian did fall to the ground on his knees, but not for long. He stood and ran up to Jody, grabbed hold of his shoulders, then yelled, "Now."

A raging blackness envelope Jody's mind as if he'd suddenly entered a putrid sewer filled with lighted gas fumes. He hadn't. It was only that his mind was now connected with Lucian's so they could raise the ship.

Now that Jody's mind was joined with Lucian's, he also felt the connection with the Entity. He recoiled in shock at who it was they were going to lift up out of the muck. The devil? The fallen angel from beneath its prison? Hadn't God put it there? Would it leave earth only to haunt and destroy other worlds? What am I doing? Jody asked himself. What about Jen? Mr. Smith help! Should I stop?

A scream exploded in Jody's mind as he joined Lucian in reaching mental fingers down into the hard, gritty muck below the Mississippi River. Cement hard from eons of impaction, Jody felt as if his fingernails were scrapping on slate. Rocks and dirty pebbles seared his fingers to the bone as he reached further and further down.

Finally, Jody's giant, muddled knuckles knocked against the huge object that had started teetering on the edge of the dark cave. He reached beneath the object and gripped it in a hard, an invisible double fist, meeting Lucian's hands as it did the same. As their hands touched Jody, once again thought how sweet revenge would be. Why not attack Lucian and this thing right now.

Suddenly, he knew why not. Unexpectedly a third mind had joined the fray. Three sets of invisible hands now worked to lift the ship out of the muck. Jody could feel Lucian's mind jerk back in shock when the extra mind joined them. The group of mental hands pulled and tugged the object out from beneath the river.

The crack from the earthquake made the job easier but not easy enough. Jody had sweat rolling down his face before they finally broke through the bottom sediment and brought the ship up into the muddy water. The ship gained a sudden buoyancy which made it easy to float it up to the surface where it lay, for a moment, bobbing up and down in the huge disturbed waves, its diamond shell glittering in the sun.

Jody took this in and then gasped as the ship lifted up off the water in a blast of hot, steamy air. Lucian and Jody both lifted their heads to watch its slow ascent into the sky. Before long it became a black hole shimmering in front of the sun.

All three minds had disconnected by now and this reassured Jody and calmed his nerves. He had been afraid that he would be stuck inside Lucian forever.

It was then they heard a siren behind them. And Uncle Louie came running from the car to Jody. The real Anthony ran with him. Jennifer called out from behind a tree and they all looked at her as she ran up to Uncle Louie.

At the sight of Meyers, Lucian took off running for the trees.

Suddenly, a loud explosion from the sky tore at all their ears. They all looked up towards the loud detonation that came from above, then stood in quiet, awful awe at the scene that hung in the sky above them.

A giant, shadowy black butterfly had opened wide its wings as if to fly. It hovered poised, framed by the golden morning sun. Then it silently dissolved into small pixels of Smokey air and then into nothingness.

Quiet filled their space for a long moment. The explosion finally shattered the silence. Meyers turned and ran after Lucian. Jody turned his chair around to the copse of trees that Lucian had run to with the intention of getting revenge, but stopped when a sparrow screamed frantically from a near by tree as if in warning. Besides, Jennifer had run up to his chair and was giving him hugs; so, he had to smile even though he could

see his Uncle Louie running into the trees after Lucian. The real Ant was still standing with his mouth open.

Zee stood next to Jennifer as Jody lift up the ship. When Mr. Smith joined the effort to lift up the ship, she knew something strange was about to happen and would have helped if she could. All she was able to do at this time was cheer the events forward, but she now understood how her own actions had helped heaven's plan. Heaven had put all of them in place for this one, single, overriding final moment—a final that led to earth's salvation.

She remembered her introduction to Jody and his craving need which fit her character perfectly, how she drew him out, how she befriended Jennifer, and most of all, how she put a kink into Lucian's plans to turn Jody towards evil. She shuddered to think how the plan might have played out if Jody had learned to hate and damage people. Meyers was due thanks too, and she believed he would get it. And all the time, Mr. Smith knew why Lucian wouldn't kill Jody and how much Jody needed his sister's care.

This she now knew because she could see a short distance into the future. Far enough to see how happy Meyers, Jody and Jennifer would soon be. Zee smiled.

All the events had built up to the crescendo of this final moment. That moment when the crack in the diamond casing of the ship had broke open and the ship exploded as it entered outer space. Mr. Smith helped turn the events to their final completion.

Zee reached down to Jennifer who was standing next to Jody's chair.

"My work is done here on earth." She told her. *"It is time for me to go."*

At Jennifer's sad, puzzled face, she added, *"But I promise to check back with you now and again as you grow up. You never need to be afraid again."*

Jennifer sniffed and said, "Jody, Zee is here and she's going to leave. Tell her to stay."

Jody looked towards his sister just as Zee reached down to give him a good-by hug. She whispered into his ear, "And I promise to keep visiting you too."

Jody blinked and smiled.

"She's going back to heaven Jen. You don't want her to stay here on earth, do you?"

"No. I guess not. Bye Zee. I love you."

Meyers came and stood next to Jennifer and Jody.

"Well, maybe Zee left for heaven, but I am not going anywhere. You're stuck with me from now on."

At the same moment the Entity's escape ship blew up, Lucian's mind also emptied of all its regulatory processes. He had been running through the trees chased by Meyers when his eyes blanked out, his knees bent, and his torso collapsed upon twisted legs. It no longer mattered to Lucian at this point. His body had already flat lined before it hit the ground in a mass of useless muscle and dead organs.

If someone from on high were looking down at the earth at this time they might think that Lucian, the high lieutenant of evil had gotten off too easily. Not so, before his body's demise, his mind had joined the Entity's inside the ship a few nano-seconds before it exploded. I leave it to the reader's imagination as to what went on during those minutes.

The rest of the Entity's clan, 50,329 thousand in all, might have wished to end so quickly, if they could have made a wish, that is.

The moment played out like this:

Mr. Kariski had one hand lifted up in the air to strike his wife in the face for the second time while the other hand held her long, strawberry blond hair gathered up in his fist when the ship imploded. Suddenly, his eyes went blank, his mouth slackened and dribble began to run from his mouth as he lost his balance and footing. When he fell backwards onto the floor, his fist hadn't loosened as fast as his mouth and his wife was pulled down beside him. She commented afterward that she felt his whole body give up its volition and strength before he became a vegetable. The newspaper avoided printing her statement that he urinated on himself. She described the bowl movement in such vivid terms that they didn't dare print it, though they wanted to.

Every newspaper in the nation, and around the world was printing similar happenings but they too, left out most of the vivid details.

The New York Times reported how one man, later found to be the leader of a child porno-sex ring, was found crawling on his hands and knees on the banister and balcony ten stories above 25th avenue, gurgling and drooling and spiting and crying until he fell and splattered onto the pavement below.

The Singapore news reported two people jumped off a boat feet first. Before their jump, both were reported to have begun whining and screaming over and over until the water drowned out their cries.

The dramatic ones, those people who drowned, jumped, crashed or died screaming of fright were in the minority. Most of the thousands upon thousands of people effected by that single momentous explosion went rag doll slack, loosing their coordination and ability to think as they dropped to the ground. It became a matter of majority opinion that the lucky ones had died screaming, while the unlucky ones relived nightmares over and over again inside thousands of nursing homes set up specifically for their care.

Doctors around the world were puzzled and scratched their heads over the number of people who suddenly lost their control of voluntary movement and thought all at the same moment. The media was in a frenzy for longer than a week, which added to the strangeness. When the news finally settled down, it was clocked to have happened at 6:23 am Eastern Standard Time. Many people opened up their bibles to Revelation in search of an answer. A small few knew what had actually happened.

Meyers learned as much as anyone was able. He saw Lucian take a step and then suddenly loose all ability to hold himself up before he hit the ground dead. Count one bad one off the earth, he thought, but within the next week they learned of the thousands who also ended at that moment. He knew more than most people because he collected the news bulletins from around the world. He understood that the thing in the ship had been a great evil that was done now. Mr. Smith and Zee's involvement is what helped him add up the correct facts. Zee, my lovely angel, as he now thought of her.

Something else was new too; now he believed in things unseen. Jody's telephone rings and beeps pounding in his head for twenty-four hours must have finally shook his

head loose, he mused and remembered what Zee told him once, “Everyone’s mind is waking up. People all over the world are learning to speak mind to mind.” The new Meyers no longer shrugged at such a possibility. He also realized how easy it would be for Jody to misuse his unusual mental talent, and promised himself he’s stay close to give moral support and direction. That kid needs me and Jennifer too. He intended to make sure that they always had their Uncle Louie close at hand.

Ant understood that the explosion had somehow killed Lucian, and so he was untwined once again, no more hated look alike to mar his image. Happiness glowed from his friend's face now, and his own when he was with Jennifer. He knew Jody would always be his friend and somehow he knew that him and Jennifer would become more than a friends one day.

Jennifer could now make a good guess as to why it all happened. Mr. Smith smiled as he whispered to her to be quiet when they snuck out of the trailer. He knew there was going to be an explosion. Mr. Smith came because she needed help, just like Zee who told her she could grow up and be happy now.

Jody knew. His mental connection with Lucian had showed him much of what was inside Lucian’s mind. A frightening lot of information that he decided to forget as soon as possible. He refused to speak about what he knew to Jennifer and even to his Uncle Louie. Maybe some day. For now, it was best forgotten. Life was too valuable and fun to let bad memories color it with dark. There is a whole world of knowledge waiting for me to explore and study.

A great thing also happened on earth at the moment of the Entity’s death that no human eyes took note of, only the angels. Their prison now broken open, the earth’s millions of imprisoned souls were suddenly free to rise into the universe. Confused, as if awakening from a long dream, they rose up from the center of the earth’s depths then lifted up into the clouds. Angels directed the few souls who turned in circles, to confused to leave right away. Heaven welcomed all of them with open arms like children lost but found while angels sang to them of happiness.

