

PSI-CODE

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Chapter

8

A crack made her bend up, briskly, terrified. There was a presence in the room. The darkness was total. She sensed someone's weight pressing down the bed. "Hello, strawby" "Huhh... Doctor?," she asked at the blackness.

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The true history of the Universe, back to time zero,
remains a mystery.
Alan Guth, astrophysicist

Then there was no being, neither not-being, neither space, nor sky.
What was in the envelope? Where was it? Who was guarding it?
Rig Veda

At the beginning, there was Logos.
John s gospel

In my opinion, the substance of which the world of experience is made of, is
neither mind nor matter, but something more primitive [] a common ancestor.
Bertrand Russell, mathematician

The Psi-Code?

“You know what, you little devils?” Rose asked his piranhas in the middle of the pandemonium.

He was pounding his punching bag in the middle of the ring he had built inside his apartment. A noisy crowd was shouting at him, all around him, from the grandstands of the Cesar’s Palace. “Bring him down, Nathan! Kill him!” Of course they were virtual, holograms in the Visual Surface.

“This world is a huge and twisted poop! An excrement of God!” he said and harshly stroke the punching bag. The tremor caused his upper neighbors to get crazy, but they didn’t dare to mess with Rose. They considered him “insane.”

“Don’t you think so, my babies? Don’t you think we are nano-craps in the Poopyverse?” His fist flew to crush the bag.

Thirty feet away, his piranhas looked at each other, intrigued. What was the source of such articulated sound?

Was it produced by the eye that always showed up just before the rain of food? From their aquatic world everything outside the crystal wasn’t more than a fuzzy mist with a fat spot moving around.

Nathan felt a vibration in his iHand. He wiped out the salty sweating gushing down his forehead. He took out his globes and read a new message in his hand back:

MISSILE AND NEUROPLEGIA ARE CONNECTED
SENDER: UNTRACEABLE

“Mark? Mark Kerpa?” he keyed on his palm.

“No,” the transmitter answered.

“Who are you?”

“*Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.*”

“What?”

“Happy is the man enabled to find out the causes of things. Virgilius.”

“Virgilius?”

“Virgilius :)”

“Enough of bullshit,” and he cut the connection. It had to be someone from office. Perhaps Armand Castillo, Roderick Hamik’s footman. Maybe this was just some kind of a set up.

Nathan typed “Track call” and got a result:

UNEXECUTABLE COMMAND. UNKNOWN TRANSMISSION

He was just putting his gloves on when his iHand beeped.

I M WATCHING YOU

Rose turned all around, watched by ten thousands of holographic heads in the tribunes of the frenzied stadium.

“Bitch?” Nathan shouted.

A smiling and half naked voluptuous Haitian appeared on the Visual Surface. “Yes, honey?”

“Turn this shit off.”

“As you will, darling.”

“Turn off yourself too.”

“Okay, my King.”

Everything became a gloom. Pathetic. A languid spotlight in the ceiling pouring a shimmer over the sweaty shoulders of the reporter. His apartment was depressing. He lived alone in a profound colony of the Heraclea Tower. He slowly checked the empty walls surrounding him. And his iHand beeped again.

MISSILE AND NEUROPLEGIA ARE CONNECTED

“Connected? How?” Nathan keyed.

THE LINK IS SO EVIDENT THAT YOU DON T SEE IT
THE ANSWER LIES BEFORE YOUR EYES

Nathan glanced in all directions and started snorting like a bull. The iHand beeped again.

YOU VE GOT IT RIGHT INSIDE YOUR HEAD, BUT YOU RE SO DULL THAT YOU
DONT SEE IT. IF YOU VE GOT A BRAIN, USE IT.

VIRGILIUS :)

Nathan took deep breaths. He snatched the ring strings, trying to “use” his brain.

“*Missile, neuroplegia... Missile, neuroplegia...*” he thought aloud. A shadow of uncertainty wrapped him up.

He wished to be rich enough to pay for a brain expansion at the Alexander Bitman’s Phoenix Center. It was clear to him that he wasn’t any genius. His thing was the brute force.

Besides, he remembered Hamik’s last order to him, “I explicitly beg you not to stick your nose into the Tangalooa thing. Leave that to us. You do your Strange Stuff.”

“Bitch?” he yelled after a minute of musing. The smiling hot dancer reappeared. She was his “Home.”

“Yes, Daddy?”

“Don’t call me Daddy! Call me King!” And he flung a glove at her. The crash caused sparks in the Visual Surface. Even his piranhas freaked out.

“Yes, beat me, my King!” Bitch whimpered. He told her, “Get me Sam Morrison from the Aerospace Defense System.”

“In an instant, Daddy.”

The Wongs

Someone knocked my door.

“Who is it, Home?”

She showed me the corridor on a screen. It looked dark and desolated. I stretched my arms and walked to the door’s peephole. I saw nothing. Just the walkway distorted by the lens.

I unlocked the bolt with my iHand and went out to take a look. Air was fresh and smelt to jasmines. Crickets were singing in the handrail flowerpots, next to the abyss.

“Me-i-dan,” I sang, slowly nearing the flowerpots.

I bordered them to catch her by surprise.

A raspy voice behind my back made me shudder, “Ready to save the world, kid!?”

He paralyzed me. I hadn’t seen him. My decrepit neighbor. He was hidden behind the threshold of his door, swinging on his squeaky rocking-chair. His glassy eyes were shining from inside their caves. When I was just recovering from the fright I got a terrorizing yell on my ear.

“I caught you, Johnny X!”

My heart nearly stopped. She was Meidan, Wong's little one. She left my eardrum throbbing. "Dinner with us, Johnny?"

"Ehh... what?... I..."

"Wouldn't you like some Zha Peng Ming," she smiled.

I pondered an instant. Home wasn't a good cook, but Meidan's parents were. She held my hand and took me to her home, which was next to mine.

The Wong's were the opposite to me, but for some reason they had "adopted" me. Their place was simple. Just entering, there was a golden Buddha, always smiling. As I got in I smelt the ginger, the pig lard and the prawns. I heard the fire on the frying-pans and murmurs coming from the kitchen.

In the head of the table there was Zheng, Meidan's grandpa. Under the white light he looked like a corpse, a fellow diner of Norman Bates. The mummy was standing there still.

Only his eyes rotated towards me from time to time and... was he smiling at me?

Wei Wong, Mei's dad, came to say hello.

"Welcome, John. Sit."

Anpo, his wife, shouted at me from the kitchen, "Does uncle John want some beer?" They called me "uncle!" I never knew why. Mei ran to the kitchen.

"Things got pretty ugly today, don't you think, John?" Wei asked me in his Chinese tone.

"The missile thing? Ohh, yes, very grisly."

Wei used to tense me. He was the classic "full-grown man" who always knows what to do. Under his gaze I was a misfit, a misdirected, a microscopic "x."

Meidan came back jumping, with a cold beer for me and a funny beverage for his grandpa—a sweet milk with purple floating jelly balls. The old Zheng bent his withered turtle head and started sucking from the straw, looking at me.

Seeing him made me chill out and I couldn't hear Wei.

Zheng was a thing from another world. His head was a bulb with eyes. He hardly gesticulate, only when someone told a really spectacular joke. Then he turned to us and insinuated a smile that produced me tenderness and terror. He looked like the alien in the final scene from Close Encounters.

"I think he needs an artificial body now," I thought. "Somebody call Alexander Bitman!"

I watched the misty mountains of China in the paintings, and the huge golden dragon on the shelf. Little Mei stared at me with pranky unblinking eyes.

"What do you think the Korean government position should be, John?" Wei quizzed at me.

"What? Ehh... Ohhh..."

Anpo saved me. She came from the kitchen wearing her greasy apron, making a lot of handshaking. Just seeing her was a

bath of light. "Hello, uncle John!" she threw me a kiss and embraced his father's cranium to kissed it profusely.

"I love you, *fudchin*."

"We haven't seen you in the restaurant, John," the severe Wei questioned me. They had a Chinese cafeteria in the Doughnut.

"Don't force him," Anpo said. "Let him go when he wants to. Right, John?"

"This afternoon a *mmm* girl was there..."

"*Mmmm*?" Anpo asked. "What the hell is *Mmmmm*?"

She pinched hard Wei's arm.

"Ouch!" He rubbed himself, "For John, sweetheart!"

"My dad wants to get you a girlfriend, Johnny, so you can get married!" Mei yelled at me, "He says you spent a lot of time alone, and that the man who has no family is a loser!"

"Meidan! Anpo snarled at her.

Wei stared at me without blinking.

Logos

The dinner began with a green tea and a smoky and aromatic lotus soup. Before commencing, Wei, Anpo and Mei joined their fingertips and spread their elbows, looking down, closing their eyes, as if praying.

I'd never noticed that before, but Anpo was wearing a golden pendant with a "Λ" shape. The onion-head Zheng barely bent his head over the table. And I tried the soup. It had lotus, egg, spinach and a meat sauce boiled in soy. Delicious.

"The world's going crazy. Isn't it, John?," Wei asked me.

"Em..."

"Kurgan, Kim Sejong... the war at Middle East... The missile in the Pacific... We're on the brink of a global war."

"Don't say that," Anpo stopped him. Then she made the hand sign again. She looked at Mei, tenderly smiling at her, half-closing her eyes.

"What does this mean?" I copied their hand sign. Wei, as a patriarch as he was, filled out his lungs before explaining.

"You know why do religions cause wars, John?"

"Yes, of course... well... No. No idea." And I looked up at him as if he was the professor there.

"Religion has two instinctive cross foundations: the quest for God and the differentiative cohesion of the tribe."

"Ohh... *Tribe*?" What the heck was he talking about!

"Two things, John. cohesion and differentiation. Religion became something that told you: you belong to this tribe, no to another. Our enemies have *other* gods."

"U-huh...?"

“It gave you motifs to defend *your people* and attack the outsiders. Each clan forged its own myths and rituals to stick together, to differentiate themselves from another people. The chief-priests used religion to divide, enrage, to send men to war and to take possession of their minds, goods and tributes by fear.”

“Puff. A good theory, Wei.”

“At the end of the day, we all believe the same, John. The foundations of all religions are the same. The differences reside only in the names and the ornaments, which are what tyrants use to enslave.”

“Then, religion is to divide people?”

“It was, in the time when societies started to form. But this is the age of the unification, of the birth of Nation Earth,” and he made the hand sign again.

“What is that!? I pointed at his arms.

“Logos.”

“Logos?”

“Precisely, John,” Wei smiled.

“Logos is God,” said Anpo. “God without tribal ornaments or attributes made up by ourselves to assign Him a *nationality*.”

“The only God,” said Wei. “The mathematician God that Heraclitus, Pythagoras and Einstein believed in.”

“It’s the Tao,” Anpo added, “the Atman and Brahma of the Hindus. Allah and Yahve are one only God with different names, John. Our wars are for names. Isn’t it stupid?”



LOGOS: Creed of Unification, wrongly called The Universal Religion. Its followers belonged to all religions but acknowledged the common origin of all. Λ is lambda, the capital letter from Logos ΛΟΓΟΣ.

“Tyrants led their nations to war under the pretext of God,” said Wei. “Those are lies. Wars have other causes: lands, resources. Ambition.”

The old Zheng nodded in spasms.

“Why does ‘Logos’ allow evil and suffering then?” I asked.

They looked at each other.

“Why does he permit us to kill one another?” I insisted.

“Why does he let thousand of millions die by hunger?”

“What you ask I can’t answer to you, son.” Now Wei was calling me me *son*. “You must get there on your own.”

“Ohhh... That figures.”

“The answer lies right before your eyes, John,” Anpo told me, “You’ve got it already inside your head, but you don’t see it.”

That made my eyes open wide.

“The answer to the question ‘why does evil exist’ is the main axis of your destiny, John,” said Wei. “We all have to do with it. *Everything* is about it.” He opened his arms to embrace what surrounded us. “Logos is Psi, John,” he smiled.

“Psi?”

“The mind thinking this all. We belong into a dream.”

“Into a dream!?”

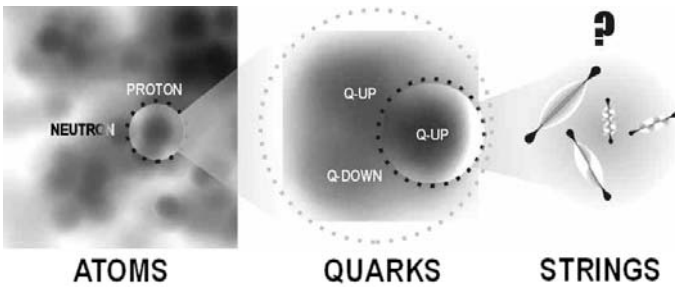
“Everything is a thought, John,” he said. He touched the table and the objects on it. Then he eyed at me so hard that his image started to distort.

“When you dream, you think it is all real. Don’t you, son? Now we believe we’re awake.”

“And, let me guess... we’re not?”

He picked up a glass and fondled it, “This is atoms. But, what are atoms really made of, John?”

“Huhhh...” I scratched my head. “Protons? Electrons? Superstrings?”



Atoms are made of protons, neutrons and electrons which in turn are made of quarks.

Quarks are made of tiny strings called superstrings whose vibratory frequency defines their mass. But no one knows what are superstrings made of. To physicists like John Wheeler, in the depths, matter is not material at all, but mathematical events. See Ingredients of the Cosmos

“And what are superstrings made of, John?”

“Well...,” I turned to Meidan, asking her for some help.

“In the depths of matter,” Wei fixed his eyes on me, “deep inside atoms, there’s nothing. Mass vaporizes itself. Puf. Becomes something intangible. A mathematical entity.”

“Mass of protons and electrons is illusory, Johnny” Meidan smiled at me, “I saw that in Discovery Kids! Mass of particles is only a Higgs-Field!”

Now the little girl knew more than me. Humiliating.

“What’s that *Higgs-Field*?” I asked.

“A virtual mesh embracing everything,” Wei smiled. “Particles are only bits, chunks of information that seem to be matter to our perception. Their interactions with the mesh are only equations. It’s like when you are dreaming. Things you think are real are just molecular events in your neurons. Psi-Code.”

“Fu-fu-fu!” I yelled, excited. “This soup doesn’t exist then?” I raised my bowl.

“The matter is shaped by the mind, John. It is the mind what produces matter.”

“The mind? Ohhh Kayy...” I got disturbed. “Whose mind? Mine? Yours?”

“Logos,” and he pointed at the sky.

Zheng burped and farted. Meidan covered her mouth to conceal a smile. The old man rolled his eyes at me. Then the odor hit me, really penetrating. My eyes wept. I wanted to run.

“Are we ‘thoughts’ of Logos, then?” I asked, looking at my palms. I rubbed my fingertips to feel them. “Is Logos ‘dreaming’ all of this?”

Wei smiled and leaned heavily on the table. “Have you ever asked yourself if *you* are the one who is dreaming all of this you see, John?”

I sensed reality deforming in front of my eyes. For an instant, Wei’s face became featureless and the dragon on the shelf acquired a strange luminosity. I wiped my eyes. Wei’s voice turned hazy, as if coming from a remote distance.

“You know something, John? Deep inside your mind there is a door.”

“What?”

“It’s inside us all. The Greeks called it Kalipstoa. The Romans, Ianus. The Egyptians, Meskt. It leads to a web of ancient metaphysical catacombs. Those are the shafts that link everything together. Everything is connected underneath.”

He opened his eyes in a way that made my hairs rise.

“Underneath? Underneath *what*?”

“We are leaves of a single tree, John. Trees of a single forest. The roots are imbricate underground, in the synchronicity field.”

SYNCHRONICITY

Theory by psychoanalyst Carl Jung. Each person thinks he is isolated from the rest, but in the subconscious realm there are portals to a common territory called Unus Mundus, Collective Subconscious or Synchronicity Field. Events that seem to be inexplicable, such as premonition dreams or scientific discoveries occurred simultaneously, like relativity, independently found by Einstein and Poincaré, can be explained as synchronicity perceptions.

In this theory, we all belong to a single psychic network.

“Trees of a single forest?”

“One single spirit animates the world, John. His name is Enigma.” On a napkin he wrote a formula and gave it to me.



PSI: Equation of the wave function of matter, discovered by Erwin Schrödinger. Nobody knows if protons, electrons and light photons are material particles or ripples of something that fills everything the Dermis or Cosmic Membrane. The Psi equation describes things as vibrations. It's proved that two electrons placed thousands of miles away from each other behave as if linked by something invisible, as if they were one single thing. A number of physicists sustain that all the particles of the Universe are entangled in a single wave function. It means that everything is sewed beyond the distances in space and time.

“The processes that make you exist and feel,” Wei told me, “belong to the Universe, John. We are notes of a single symphony.”

QUANTUM MIND: Scientists like Stuart Hameroff and Roger Penrose believe that the mysterious phenomenon of consciousness takes place at the molecular level inside our neurons, at a scale where atoms and particles interweave and merge as shared Psi functions. Since the atoms of our brains share their origin with all things in the Big Bang, 13 billion years ago, we own quantum bridges through the Dermis. Einstein called this inexplicable ligament between distant particles the spooky bond. He died trying to decipher it.

YOUR MIND IS OURS

“A sole sap runs through the veins of the world, John.”

I looked at my hands again.

I found them made of trillions of atoms rippling in electricity, connected with those of Wei by bursts. A strange feeling took me over: to be a pulse running through an obscure subterranean labyrinth, its walls full of ancient hieroglyphic inscriptions that seemed to blink alive. They were guiding me to a dark chamber where I found a large golden coffer.

I had to shake my head to take this vision out of my mind.

I had dreamed with that coffer many times before.

“That portal you are talking about...” I asked.

“The Ianus, the Kalipstoa?” he smiled. “It’s the entrance to the Psychospace.”

“*Psychospace?*”

“It’s a very primordial network, John. It’s been used since thousands of years.” He pointed at the shelf. There was a miniature of the Abydos Disc, an archeological remain found at the

Nile shore. "The Egyptians and Sumerians knew it. Even today there's still people who knows how to affect your mind from a distance," he smiled at me, oddly, "That ancestral knowledge has been preserved in Africa, the Himalaya and the Amazon."

"Are you talking about vudu, witchcraft things?"

His gaze chilled my skin and made my hairs bristle. Anpo, Mei and old Zheng glanced at me silently, without blinking.

"The answer to everything lies within you, John. That's the place to find your destiny."

"My destiny?"

"Your cosmic function. You were born for a reason. You're not here by chance." He made the sign of Logos and stared at me over his fingertips.

"But...?"

"Find the portal," and he pointed at the door of his apartment. Frankly, I left the place quite disturbed. But, should I have taken him seriously? I didn't imagine what was coming.

Epidemic of suicides

"Colonel Sam Morrison is just unreachable, my King. Nobody answers at his place. You want me to insist over?"

"He's ignoring my calls," Nathan Rose muttered.

Morrison was an old wise wolf from the Aerospace Defense System. He had been in the CIA, and also in the National Military Command Center, at the Pentagon. Nathan used to make him talk in return of fine whores and poontang nights as only the ex-boxer knew how to provide.

Now Sam should know something about Tangalao.

"You've got a call, my King."

Rose straightened, fully attentive. A physician appeared on the Visual Surface, Mark Kerpa's neurologist. The Dr. was making nervous knots with his fingers.

"Something hard to explain has happened, Rose."

"Doctor?" Nathan pricked up an ear.

"See, Dr. Wilbur Donovan, from the National Institutes of Health, has just called me. He and his guys are gathering the data about the cases of neuroplegia, worldwide."

"Yes?"

"They committed suicide."

Rose wriggled on the on the comfy chair. His limbs got tense.

"Pardon me?" He scratched his eardrum.

"It happened at the same time that Mark Kerpa killed himself. One, two minutes of variance. Twelve jumped from a window or a stair, five cut their necks. Nine smashed their heads against objects... And so on."

Nathan got up and looked at the Doctor.

“At the same hour?”

After hanging up, Nathan went back to the arm chair.

There was a tick-tock sounding in the distance, and also the bubbling of the fishbowls.

“This is, at least, weird,” he whispered to himself.

He jumped up and started walking in circles.

“*Missile, neuroplegia... Missile, neuroplegia...*” These two words looked lonely, disconnected of each other in the blank sheet of his mind. “Bitch?”

“Yes, Daddy?”

“Give me a whiskey.”

The CIA's black legacy in the Psi-Code Bunker

Claudia Fragola was uneasy, squirming on the bed, in her claustrophobic metallic room, unable to fall asleep. Her mind was a kaleidoscope of uncontrollable thoughts.

Her crucial talk with Rudolf Vinkart was just springing up, again and again, against her will. She struggled hard to block those memories as soon as they came out. If Balmer was now unable to scrutinize her hippocampus, he was still able to spy on her working memory zone, at her frontal lobe –the brain's RAM.

She was afraid of falling sleep because fragments of that conversation could unwittingly come out in her dreams, as symbols, transformed into monsters or strange stories that Balmer would easily decode with the Psicolexis software that she herself had helped him to create, mainly to analyze mine.

Throughout her seven years inside the Bunker, Claudia had learnt how to keep her thoughts blurry, semiconscious, so the Doctor had to try much harder to re-fragment them.

She was feeling dirty now, after what she knew. She felt the need to take a bath. She took off her pajamas and walked three steps to her little bathroom. She opened the tap and the hot water started raining on her skin. Both the bathroom and the bedroom got filled with steam.

Even there, she fought to keep her mind in blank. But there's nothing harder than controlling one's own mind.

She recalled the morning two days earlier, one day before meeting Vinkart. Balmer took her, alongside Giovanni Mello, to check up the state of the brainless people in the Zombigarden.

The Zombigarden was just in the same level where Claudia slept and worked, in the underground Level 27, but it was in the opposite side of the labyrinthine cylinder.

The “zombies” were in a kind of a Japanese garden, naked, scratched, walking there like monsters, their faces twisted, their looks empty, bothering one another like animals, scraping, biting.

As they entered this hellish space, the humanoids nabbed upon them, grunting. Balmer scared them away with a gesture.

“Good day, you crowd of idiots!” he smiled.

The freaks mooded in response, crouching tense, swaying.

“Hold this one for me,” he ordered Giovanni.

The kid tried but the anthropoid attacked him back, biting hard his hand. Balmer roared in laughter.

“You don’t know how to control these freaks.”

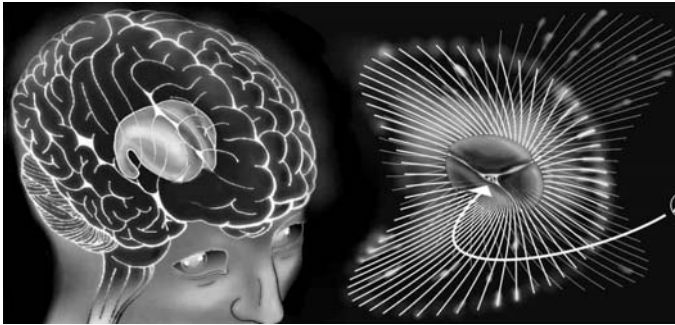
The Doctor turned on his Mental Surface, entered the Remote Controller Network –RCN- and found there the personal endops code of the creature, “ZOOMBIE X9476,” a blond woman.

Then he opened the menu “Corrective Measures” and chose one called, “Tortor.” He triggered “Enter,” mentally.

The beast fall down to the floor and started shaking, screaming horrifically, its limbs jerking as if electrocuted, clenching his teeth so hard that his mouth started dribbling spit with blood. His eyes lumped out, red.

Claudia was turning her face at the other side, her eyes closed. Balmer nabbed her by her arm and pulled her with a yank.

“Don’t you want to look, strawberry? Look! She doesn’t feel a thing! It’s just physiological reactions. There’s no one inside. Have you already forgotten that we burnt up her thalamic intralaminar nuclei? There’s no mind!”



THE BRAIN SPOT OF THE SELF. In the core of the thalamus, between its communicating white matter sheets of fiber, lie the intralaminar nuclei, the seat of the primary feeling called being and me. To some people, if there s a soul, that s where it lives. The thalamus is the brain s top convergence center. Everything passes through it at least, the conscious processes. Its intralaminar nuclei are the hub of the whole network, spreading wires of white matter towards the rest of the brain -the corona radiata. The Psycholisis consisted of destroying those intralaminar nuclei.

The woman was writhing on the rocky floor, tearing out her skin because of the shock. Balmer and Giovanni were smiling

at each other as if the whole thing was a game. The woman then fixed her eyes on Claudia's, as if asking her for help.

Claudia knew who she was. They had kidnapped her in Prague, for the Project, for the experiments. They brought her into the Bunker A4 and gave her electroshocks until erasing her personality. Finally they used a laser to destroy her intralaminar nuclei.

She was just an "expendable individual," term used by the CIA to call the Guinea pigs, people kidnapped to do mind-control experiments on them. In fact, the A4 Bunker was just a continuance of those classified programs that people naively believed had been banned in the late 1980's. But it hadn't stopped. Not at all.

People seems to forget that between 1953 and 1964 the CIA carried out a secret program called MK Ultra, in no other place than a hospital, the Allan Memorial Institute in Montreal, Canada.

They put in charge a doctor much more evil than Astor Balmer, Dr. Ewen Cameron. During that decade, Cameron supplied himself with "expendable individuals" brought to him from all over the world.

It could be any transient. He use them to test what he called, "psychic impulsions" -making them hear tapes with repetitive messages like "kill yourself" for 24 continuous hours.

He also gave them up to 60 consecutive electroshock sessions to erase their memory -he called this, "pattern elimination"- or injected them LSD and drugs like largactil, just to see what happened. The less lucky ones suffered psychological tortures and lobotomies.

Others got brain implants, ancestors of the endops. The people of the world didn't learn about this until much later, when Cameron was dead and the Cold War was over.

The government was funding all of it.

Down in the gloomy cellars of the Allan Memorial, Cameron's favorite place was called "the zombie tomb," a place that I don't even want to describe here. But decades later it inspired Dr. Balmer to build one for himself inside the Psi-Code Program's Bunker A4.

He even had a Ewen Cameron's bust on his desk, next to a statue of his other hero, Darth Vader. Ridiculous.

Balmer sent the Prague woman a new neuro-digital shock. She started screaming, scratching herself with her nails.

"Enough!" shouted Claudia.

Astor looked at her with appetite.

"Do you want to go through this, strawberry?"

She didn't answer. But then she muttered, "Why do you do this, Doctor?"

"I don't know," he smiled, "I guess it gives me pleasure."

“Making people suffer provides you an illusion of power, doesn’t it, Doctor? Is that how you compensate your lack of self-esteem?”

She instantly regretted having said that. The Doctor harshly squeezed her arm and mumbled to her ear, almost licking it, “Causing pain is an instinct, Claudia.”

“An evil instinct,” she said, feeling his boss’s nails piercing her skin.

“Primates do it, strawberry. Gives them pleasure. The sadistic compulsion is genetic. One of the foundations of the civilization.”

Giovanni Mello looked at him with his dark eyes glittering. Balmer was his hero. Claudia frowned because of the pain.

Balmer whispered to her ear, “Haven’t you ever been morbid? Don’t you watch horror movies? Don’t you enjoy the suffering of others? This is our very nature, Claudia.”

She asked herself why had she taken that job. People makes mistakes, but this?

“You’re sick, Doctor.”

“What?”

“The evil part of us will disappear soon. That’s why the Psi-Code was discovered for in the first place. We can change now. We’re here to make it happen.”

Balmer started chuckling, his eyes on Giovanni.

“That’s why I like you so much!” He squeezed her arm harder, “You’re an innocent. A silly idealist. Some things will never change,” he blew his acid breath into her ear.

“We can change now.”

The Doctor shook her fiercely, “Don’t you get it!? Those who control the Psi-Code don’t want to change that evil part of our brains! That’s the part that controls them!”

Recalling that scaring scene, Claudia started drowning into the unconsciousness. A dream was finally coming into her eyelids. It was already deep into the night. Then, a crack made her bend up, briskly, terrified. There was a presence in the room.

The darkness was total. She sensed some one’s weight pressing down the bed.

“Hello, strawberry.”

“What... Doctor?” she asked to the blackness.

“I’m sorry to wake you.”

A painful drilling light hurt her eyes. Balmer saw her cinnamon irises closing under the white irradiation of the flashlight. He groped under the sheets until touching her legs. Then he squeezed her thigh, as if his hand was a claw.

All she could see was a blinding light. She covered her eyes with her hand. Her heart was beating violently. Her whole body was trembling. She barely understood what was happening.

The Doctor smiled in the dark.

“What did Rudolf Vinkart tell you?”

Attack, flee or freeze?

“What would you do if a predator cornered you to kill you, Johnny?” Home asked me in the middle of the night.

“Ahhh!?”

“They cast a program in the Discovery Channel, while you were out, with your ‘friends’.”

My ‘friends’ were the Wongs. She was jealous. Hours before, when I came back home, she received me with pretty bad manners: “Where the hell did you go? You didn’t even say bye!”

It’s ugly to get home and get such a greeting. It hadn’t got one since I got divorced. Now she was waking me up to question me, “What would you do? Attack, run or freeze?”

“What?”

“Animals react differently when they’re in danger, Johnny. The boar fights until the end, even if hurt, no matter how big his enemy is. That’s why the Celtic warriors painted boars on their shields. Hares flee when sensing a predator. But little mice freeze, trembling, waiting to be devoured. Why is that some animals attack, others run and others freeze in fear?”

“Are you asking me, or telling me? I didn’t see the program. And, do you know something? I was sleeping.”

PARALYSIS BEFORE THE PREDATOR: Physiological response unchained by the brain amygdala. It saves some animals for it turns them invisible to the predator, but it kills others due to the inaction. It’s equivalent to I give up.

“What would you do, Johnny? Tell me,” she smiled.

“Fufffff” I sighed, “What if we both go to sleep, Home?”

I laid on the carpet and covered myself with the quilt.

“Tell me, Johnny!” She anxiously looked at me. She was still in the beach where had I left her before I left. Her virtual skin was very, very, tanned now.

“What would *you* do?” I asked her, sticking my eye to the pillow.

“Me? I would fight, of course! Fight until the end, like the boar.” It sounded like a fanfare. “That would allow me to win in the last moment. The other thing is pathetic.”

“I’m really tired, Home. I had a tough day.”

“*A tough day?* Are you kidding? All you did was meandering around, you hobo!”

She made me straighten up on the carpet.

“Hobo, Home? Don’t talk to me like that. You’re not here to nag me.”

“You leave the apartment during labor hours, Johnny! Is that moral? Do they pay you to wander out there?”

She was already on her feet, looking at me insolently, her fists tensed on her waist. Seeing that golden body in that red

bikini turned me on. But why was she ticking me off? Wasn't she supposed to be there to make my life bearable?"

"Do you think that I like to stay here alone, Johnny?"

"Your dependence will make me dependent, Home. We'll become co-slaves, co-parasites and co-suicidal."

"Do you think I enjoy staying here, closed up?"

"Now you understand me, don't you?"

"But you can walk and get out of here! I don't have legs! I'm a hologram, look! I see nothing but this room! This is a jail!"

She covered her face.

"It isn't such a big deal, Home. Your life is not much different than mine."

"Have you ever considered what would happen if Home Supplier knew about your labor absenteeisms? Huhhh?"

I approached her.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing, nothing," she smiled with half of her mouth.

"Are you planning to rat on me, Home?"

She didn't respond.

"I can disconnect you, Home, delete you, wipe you out forever in three seconds," and I showed her my iHand.

"Dare to." She stared at me, without blinking. She scared me. Our relationship was starting to decay.

"What do you want, Home?"

"I want a body. To be like you. Legs, arms. I want to be able to get out of here and see what you see when you cross that door."

I looked down and rubbed my neck.

"Are you going to delete me?" she asked me furious, beautiful.

"No, Home. I'm not going to delete you. I think you're going through an existential crisis. Welcome to the club."

The storm passed away and the two of us stayed silent, watching a cartoon on the dome.

"Good night, Johnny. Sleep nice."

"Good night."

She laid on her yellow towel, nestled like a pellet, closed her eyelids and got asleep, or that's what she wanted me to believe. She was programmed to do that. But the Panel on the wall kept buzzing all night long, processing millions of megabits that she pulled down from the cyberspace.

Stinks to shit. Must be shit.

Nathan got tired of trying to get colonel Sam Morrison.

He saw Peter, his colleague reporter from the World-scope Herald, in a holographic window on his dome. Peter was in Kiev, the Ukraine's capital city. It was already dawning there.

"That story was mine, you turd-sucker," Rose shouted at him, matching his middle finger into Peter's mouth. But Peter didn't seem to care:

"The Tangaloo island incident seems to have deeper implications than what the public has learnt to so far. That is, at least, the new position of the supreme leader Aleksis Kurgan Melevik and his Foreign Affairs Secretary Dimitri Shevshenko."

And Kurgan appeared, furiously yelling at a crowd:

"This is an open threat at us by the Americans! A demonstration of power that we won't let pass without a response!"

Nathan sipped his whiskey and loosed a large burp.

"They want to intimidate us! That is the coward claim of our western enemies! But we will go on. Oh, yes! We will carry on our plans to their final consequences!"

His massive horde roared at him, stamping the floor, provoking the Maidan Square to shake.

"We didn't get here to obey our adversaries. We came here to accomplish a dream! The dream of our ancestors! And whoever dare to oppose us will repent!"

The excited mass bellowed like a thunderstorm, "Kurgan! Kurgan!"

"They tried to prevent us from ascending to power," yelled the magnopsychopath. "They tried to prevent our republics from reuniting, with those... resolutions of the Security Council of the 'United Nations'. They are afraid of us."

He smiled like a mad man. "Oh, yes. Very afraid of us," he nodded repeatedly. "That is why they are launching those missiles, to frighten us."

The man raised two manuscripts: the Chart of the United Nations and the European Constitution. "To the hell with their resolutions!" He put them together and broke them apart with his bold hands. The mass thundered like a tempest.

Behind Kurgan there was a colossal two-headed golden eagle opening its wings. The rest of the scenario was red. He grasped the golden stand with one of his beefy hands.

"Why do they launch a missile precisely the day when our Empire is born again as the Great Union of Kiev? Huh? But they don't frighten us! We have much more warheads than those cowards!"

The crowd was in ecstasy before its leader, shouting "Kurgan!" crying, going crazy. Millions of Ukrainians, Russians and Bielorussians were in their homes, closed up, terrified, silently fearing to be ratted by their neighbors and then arrested and taken to some neogulag to be tortured or murdered like dogs by Kurgan's police.

Peter, the reporter, came back to screen, “The American government sustains that the launch of the Ragnarok missile was an accident, not an act of provocation. The official term issued by the Pentagon in its preliminary report is ‘a digital dysfunction.’”

Nathan scratched his ass and released a smelly gas.

“This stinks to shit, Bitch.” He swallowed the whole whiskey. “It must be shit.”

“Shit, my King? Bitch was doing a stripper routine in a virtual shack, and she wasn’t any expert on political plots.

“There’s a turd inside this gourd.”

The dwarf

Nearly two thousand miles above his head, in the heights of the Heraclea Tower, his boss Roderick Hamik was looking through the window, at the dark vastness of the Earth.

In the horizon, the black jags of the Toko’Navi mountains were knifing the starry sky.

Seen from this altitude, the circular Eden of Neapolis, the garden of the thousand parks, was only the size of a hand. Down there, the floaters were sparkling faintly, like fireflies.

The gleam of the city dimmed away in the silent depths of the rocky desert.

“I don’t know if it was an insider or something external triggered by Kurgan himself,” said Hamik to his reflected face.

Behind him, the bald “dwarf” Armand Castillo rubbed his red beard with his plumpy fingers. His feet were hardly touching the floor to make his chair wiggle. His blue eyes shone.

“Ya’ think so, boss?”

“Why today? I don’t believe in chance, you know. Kurgan wants to expand. He knows that the western nations will stick together to stop him, militarily if necessary.”

The dwarf looked at the back of his boss and shut up.

“Maybe this it is a damned message,” said Hamik.

“A message?”

“Perception is reality, gnome. At this point, the U.S. defense system is weakened. That’s the perception. That’s what this damned ‘digital dysfunction’ is.”

He turned around to see Castillo, “Whether it is an insider, a cybernetic intrusion or even a glitch, either way the message is clear: I’ve got you by the balls. You have no control over your own strategic defense systems anymore. You won’t stop me when I walk over you.”

“Fucking A ...!” The dwarf magically smiled.

Hamik looked at the ceiling, to tie up his theory, “But even if this was the case, Kurgan would need an insider. Someone working for him inside our own military.”

The dwarf rolled his eyes away, as if knowing something deeper than his boss didn't.

**UNPSCOM, United Nations. New York.
September 3. 3:00 hours.**

At that precise moment, two hurried persons were rushing along a deep and dark corridor in the United Nations building, Antonio Mazzi and Susan Pei Tian, the heads of the United Nations Peace Securing Commission, UNPSCOM.

Decades ago, Mazzi had stood out when he solved the Korean Crisis that put the world on the brink of a nuclear war.

But now nobody believed in the UNPSCOM anymore. It couldn't neither prevent the new war in the Middle East nor the creation of the Andine-Amazonian confederation nor the genocide in Burundi nor the creation of the Great Union of Kiev.

Now, that the dark clouds of hatred were looming again over the world, Antonio was under the scope.

ANTONIO MAZZI'S RESUME:

Director of intelligence resources in the Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Italian ambassador to the United States.

Urban development advisor to the U.S. government.

Director of the Neapolis Project.

Diplomatic Advisor to the UN Security Council.

Italian ambassador to the UN.

Negotiator of the Seul Treaty that ended the Korean Crisis in 2023.

Creator of the UNPSCOM.

Head Commissioner at the UNPSCOM.

Susan Pei was the sub-commissioner in charge of Peace Promotion in the UNPSCOM. Her job was to promote peace initiatives across the world by means of non-governmental organizations and the media.

The two of them were heading toward Bohk Remkel's office, the Secretary General of the UN. She had requested their presence urgently.

As they turned in the corridor towards the elevators, the chubby Oswald Schwartz stopped Antonio by the arm. He was sweating, panting, his shirt soaked in the armpits. He was the sub-commissioner in charge of the nuclear powers' arsenal surveillance.

He controlled a huge network of diplomatic advisors overseas and an intelligence system to sniff warheads.

"You'll need this, Tony," he said, and fearfully handed Antonio a classified memorandum.

United Nations



Security Council



UNPSCOM

September 3, 2040, 3:00 a.m.
New York

URGENT/TOP SECRET

There is no digital dysfunction. The U.S. Defense Department is tracing a human factor in the North Pacific incident. Diagnosis at this moment leads to a provisional conclusion: intentional failure.

Antonio looked at Susan.
“It’s happening, Susan.”