

GRAILEM

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**A SPACE VOYAGE OF
THE FUTURE**

Grailem
by
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To those I have known whose time was short.

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The Author

Chapter One

The magnetic field of the passing asteroid is generating enough energy to pull Grailem towards it. Waking from an aimless sleep he tries to use his precious energy to move closer. It had been aeons since he had stood on, or even felt a solid surface beneath his feet.

Grailem had been drifting aimlessly through space since his spacecraft had exploded, maybe a million years ago now. The exploding fuel tanks had thrown him out into the cold of space with such a force that he had almost achieved the speed of light. The clouds of dust and gases of forming nebula he passed through slowed him down as he flew uncontrolled through the cosmos. With no propulsion system to aid him, the friction of forming nebulae of dust and gas eventually brought his speed down to a few kilometres per second.

The years passed slowly for him as he had little to distract his thoughts and he had long wished for the release of death. The only part of him that is human is his brain; and this has been incorporated completely into an artificial body. The body had been especially designed to cope with all environments; including the vacuum of space, but with the vital flaw of no propulsion system.

The long held dream that Man could eventually conquer death had become a reality. Grailem and many others like him, are the prototypes for a new generation of Man. The body skeleton, made of modern metal clusters, that would never decay, was almost indestructible. His inner machine workings were covered in a flexible carbon hybrid. The carbon, formed with the mineral pansalite under extreme pressure gave the appearance and feel of human skin. The new kind of Man had to be in Man's own image and Grailem looked a prime example of his species; a little over two metres tall with a muscular looking body and handsome round face he could pass at a distance as human on any planet. Closer examination of his eyes would reveal their mechanical nature betraying his true identity. This was not a problem on his home planet as many people possessed artificial eyes – but to an outworlder he was one not to be trusted.

Mankind had been incorporating humans with artificial limbs and internal organs for generations. The more that Man depended on technology, the physically weaker the human race had become. Many humans were regularly being born with disabilities like missing limbs, blindness and also the inability to speak.

Substituting the missing limbs with man-made ones and combining computer technology, the blind could see better than with normal healthy eyes (though mechanical and lacking any sign of emotion), and the disabled could walk and run. To have a disability proved to be an advantage in this new world; as the replacement limbs and internal organs were far superior to that created by nature. All those who could afford it had mechanical hearts and kidneys. Some had arms and legs deliberately amputated so that they could be fitted with far superior man-made ones.

Life expectancy became measured in centuries rather than years. After three thousand years the human part of the body mysteriously changed, making the body susceptible to disease and death. Not many people lived beyond three thousand years; it was as if the body had an internal clock that stopped when it reached a certain age. The only organ that had to remain human was the brain, but this and whatever part of the original body remained always fell susceptible to disease, killing the host.

Grailem, and several like him, had been Mankind's hope to finally achieve immortality; created in a test tube they had been genetically modified to have no arms and legs in the hope of creating a superior brain. The brain, genetically cross-mutated with an alien species of wasp brought an immunity to the diseases that had affected Man. Kept as laboratory experiments initially and suspended in biotic fluid for the first three years, the brains did expand to twice their normal size and intelligence. Hard wired into a computer terminal the brains had access to all of Mankind's knowledge.

Grailem had become fully self aware after only a few months and had been content in his tank of biotic fluid. Though he was connected to the computer system he was unable to communicate. Regarded as nothing more than a young infant of a few years he was generally left alone - until the military intervened.

More advanced weapons could be constructed; with a human brain making the decisions rather than a computer.

The military under the command of General Naitsirho, moved many of the functioning brains to the military's research centre in the desert. Grailem's brain, being the more advanced in intelligence and size, was moved to a 'more secure' location near the North Pole. The scientist's moving him were not aware of his dependency on the computer that was hard wired into his system. Carelessly unplugging him he becomes blind and senseless and retreats into the depths of his memories.

Aware of what was happening to him Grailem decided that the best option was not to co-operate. Trying to re-activate him at the remote military outpost they could not bring his consciousness to the surface. The military, in desperation used a very powerful mind control drug mixed with his biotic fluid to try to bring him to awareness. The drug, when mixed with the fluid transformed itself as it absorbed the oxygen and carbon from the life-giving bioplasm creating a new substance.

The transformed chemical spread into his brain forming a protective casing around the cells. Absorbing a high amount of oxygen from the bioplasm this protective casing became negatively charged, further encapsulating the newly formed chemical.

With no response from his brain to any form of external stimulation; including more powerful drugs, General Naitsirho, who had high hopes for using Grailem's advanced brain, ordered the use of electric shock treatment. Inserting electrodes into the bioplasm surrounding his brain they turned the power on at a minimum power of one milliamp.

Having no observable effect they increased the power, not realising that the increased power was raising the temperature of the bioplasm and the power was increased. Bubbles started to form around Grailem's brain as the fluid started to boil and the scientists quickly shut down the power.

Aware that the boiling bioplasm would have damaged Grailem's brain, turning him into nothing more than a vegetable, the military, saying nothing of their experiments, returned Grailem's brain to the laboratory.

The harsh treatment he had received from the military, especially the hallucinogenic drugs and the dangerous increase in temperature, had caused many of his brain cells to mutate, retaining the harmful chemicals and forming new ones. The hallucinations created by the chemicals in his mind, as he had no eyes, became overpowering and, at times, dominated his way of thinking.

The desire to see and escape the nightmare hallucinations caused a response within his brain and the newly formed chemicals. Polypeptide chains formed together and produced fibres of collagen. The fibres cross link and combined into a helical arrangement and grouped together forming two roughly shaped spheres at the front of his brain.

Grailem suddenly found, after three years of darkness, apart from the computer input, that he could see as if he had a pair of primitive eyes. The bioplasm in the tank that surrounded his brain was opaque, limiting his vision as most objects beyond his container appeared blurred. A scientist in a white coat moves towards him alerted by the increased electrical activity recorded on the monitor.

Grailem feels his 'eyes' alter shape as they focus on the approaching scientist. As he gets closer and peers into the fluid Grailem can see him perfectly; unshaven and dirty with bloodshot eyes trying to focus on Grailem's brain he is not the most attractive first sight for Grailem.

The increased high electrical activity detected and recorded by the computer is misinterpreted by the scientist. Thinking that Grailem is suffering from shock and the increased activity is a sign of distress, the scientist initiates the cooling mechanism. This will reduce the temperature of the bioplasm to five degrees below zero; the fluid will not freeze but will induce a form of sleep, reducing his brain activity to nearly zero.

Slowly Grailem feels the temperature of the bioplasm increasing; how long he had been unconscious he had no way of knowing. As the temperature increases his 'eyes' come into focus and he sees that his container is surrounded by a large group of scientists all wearing white coats and hair nets. Several are clustered around the viewing screen pointing at a graph that is displayed. Pointing at several of the high peaks one scientist looks agitated. Turning towards the group he points an accusing finger at an elderly scientist and operates a communication device on the wall. Almost immediately two very large uniformed security officers enter.

The scientist says something to them and turning towards the elderly scientist they approach him, one of the guards takes a pair of handcuffs from his pocket. The old scientist looks on in

shock as he is handcuffed and escorted out of the laboratory.

Establishing his authority, the scientist issues instructions to the remaining white coated group and they all approach Grailem in his tank of bioplasm. Watching their mouths move as they talk and not being connected to the communications terminal Grailem cannot hear what they are saying. The scientist is handed a bottle of a gold coloured liquid and Grailem's stress levels rise.

The scientist carefully opens the jar and pours the golden fluid into Grailem's tank of bioplasm. The effect of the liquid upon Grailem's brain is instantaneous; the fluid contains no electrical charge, not even a residual charge, but somehow attracts the negatively charged electrons from Grailem's newly formed defensive screen.

Now totally helpless and fully receptive to any electrical charge that may be inflicted upon him Grailem feels a wave of fear flow through his mind. The graph, still displayed on the viewing screen records his reactions as alarmingly high peaks. Darkness starts to cover him as he slips into unconsciousness bringing relief from the pain.

The increasing temperature of the bioplasm brings Grailem back to consciousness once again. Darkness surrounds him and his newly formed 'eyes' show him only blackness. Aware that he is now attached to the computer terminal he activates the viewing screen and the surrounding cameras.

At first Grailem is unsure what he is looking at until he realises it is himself. He now possesses a humanoid shaped head that is made of high pressure metal clusters similar to those of the skeleton. The metal shines, reflecting the overhead lights making the human looking eyes, of a deep brown, appear out of place. The eyes, though they look real are not functioning as Grailem is receiving the images via the communications terminal.

Below his head of bright shiny metal, the trunk of a human body has been expertly grafted onto it. Connected directly below the skull the body has a short neck and along with the lack of arms, legs and sexual organs looks grotesque. Shocked by what he has become Grailem moves the new body in agitation as the head scientist enters the room.

Looking down at Grailem and seeing Grailem's eyes staring at him he forms his mouth into an attempt at a smile; "Good to see that you are awake, I am Doctor Levashe and along with my team we will help your conversion."

Using the communications terminal Grailem initiates a new program that will speak his thoughts; "What have you done to me?" he asks.

"We have installed your brain into the metallic head that you can see before you on the viewing screen. It has been necessary to connect you to an organic body to enable your brain to function correctly. This is not the body that will be your final body but some of the neural connections need to be fitted."

Chapter Two

As Grailem grew and matured mankind's dream appeared to be becoming a reality. Grailem's brain was developing as originally designed by the scientists and so far fitted the computer prediction. The cross-mutation with the alien wasp proved to be a complete success as Grailem was immune to all disease. Deliberately exposed to deadly viruses like smallpox, rabies and even the common cold his living brain rejected them all.

The newly designed skull enclosing the brain had also proved a success as the nutrient levels remained steady during the years of study. An improved bioplasm had been created that reproduced the life giving nutrients required. His brain had now become self sufficient and by all appearances would remain alive; forever.

The mechanical eyes were connected and proved vastly superior to the blurry image he generally saw, though they did appear cold and lifeless. Capable of high magnification and unusual wavelengths from infra-red to X-ray Grailem could now see everything around him.

The telepathic part of his brain did double in its capacity in his first ten years and he soon learnt to be able to read people's thoughts. Grailem also learnt that those people who had been designated to care for him; cared less and less for him as the years passed.

Unable to move other than wriggling along the floor like a deformed maggot he spent most of his time lying on a hard bed. Though Grailem was so badly physically impaired his 'carers' with the aid of the computers, taught him of the sciences, history and religion.

By the age of twelve he had degrees in physics, chemistry, biology and via the communications terminal, able to speak five different languages. The intelligence came at a price as at an early age Grailem learnt that he was different from other people; and that difference had been created deliberately.

Keeping the ability to read the minds of those around him a secret and aware of the control the laboratory carers had over him he always tried to do as they asked. Even though he was severely disabled Grailem felt he was superior and the promise of immortality strengthened this belief.

Being so helpless he had to depend on the laboratory carers and technicians for his every needs. Every carer who had looked after him had at more than one time, abused him in some way. Being so disabled brought a dislike towards Grailem that was instinctive to the humans around him. He was regarded as a liability and even a nuisance at times; especially when it came time for him to excrete waste matter.

Many times Grailem was left to lay in his own excreta and would remain thirsty and hungry for hours. If he complained he was usually abused by being pinched or slapped and kept to wait even longer until he could lay on clean sheets.

Grailem soon learnt to keep his mouth shut.

Over the years he nursed a deep anger against those who had created him; and all the carers around him. He never saw what happened to the other active brains that had been moved to the desert. Integrated into missiles their life expectancy would be short, but he felt there were similar brains in the same position as his own.

Some of the experiments they carried out on him were a second stage development of organics. The building blocks of brain cells and tissue had already been formed by something, or someone else and inserted into him for his brain and system to complete.

At the age of twenty, and four days after his birthday Grailem's skull was injected with a large amount of the gold coloured fluid. Immediately unconscious his living brain in its metallic skull was removed from the imperfect body. His brain was accessed by a small opening that led from his right ear into the bioplasm that surrounded his brain. By the use of micro surgery, computer chips and behavioural microchips were hard wired to his brain. Unsure on how he would react and being of superior strength to the scientists, the behavioural microchips should be able to control any adverse reactions.

Satisfied that the microchips could totally disable him if need be the skull with Grailem's brain inside, was fitted to the new human looking body.

Grailem adapted quickly to his new body and soon realised that his creators had made him too well; He was indestructible and with a superior intelligence to all those around him; and also impervious to disease due to the alien wasp genes. Also carried in the wasp genes that was incorporated in his brain was its advanced intelligence. The wasp was an aggressive predator with strong reasoning powers, now combined with Grailem's own angry mind it made him into a dangerous killer.

Once he had fully mastered control of the new body and learnt that the behavioural microchips had no effect upon him, he planned his revenge on all those who had abused him over the years. Reading their minds as they abused him he soon learnt who took the most pleasure from the abuse they inflicted.

The telepathic part of his brain had expanded further once the brain had been inserted into the new body; and he soon learnt how to influence the thoughts of those around him.

After being monitored for only two weeks Grailem convinced the scientists around him, using the power of his mind, that he was safe to mix with the population. Most of the scientists were easy to persuade as their minds had little interest in real life beyond their laboratory. More interested in their experiments and computer calculations they agreed to every reassurance from him of his safety.

One scientist, a Professor Marian Florentia, an ancient shrivelled being who was nearly two thousand years old was more difficult to persuade. She seemed immune to Grailem's telepathic influence and seemed unaware of any suggestion he put in her mind.

Not having learnt the full power of his own telepathic mind he made his suggestions into a

demand. The result brought the appropriate response from the Professor as she brought him a glass of water as he had 'commanded'.

The problem was that unlike the other scientists she was aware of his actions; "You cannot control me like you do the others." she tells Grailem in a harsh voice as she throws the glass of water over him!

Grailem is shocked by the impact of the water as it hits him directly in the face; but he is more shocked at the Professor's words.

"I have watched you and the way you order my colleagues around and have been wondering when you were going to get around to me." she almost shouts in the same harsh voice.

"I have been trying to influence your thoughts for weeks." Grailem admits with a shrug of his shoulders and a wry smile; "You are the only one who is aware of my capability; and we do have an old score to settle." he finishes in a threatening voice.

"What do you mean?" asks the Professor, the fear in her voice raising it a pitch.

"When I was ten years old you came to my bed and told me you were my friend. Then you attached electrodes to my brain and connected me to your computer system. I remember the pain and me screaming for you to stop; until you stopped my screams by disconnecting the audible connections."

"It was necessary to map your cerebrum and cerebellum so that the inorganic parts that we fitted to your brain would be of the right dimensions." answers the Professor defensively.

"I was only ten years old then; why was it another ten years before I was fitted into this body?" he screams at her in anger; "Why did you torture me for ten years?"

"It was necessary for the research, your brain may have rejected the implants and it was necessary to observe the absorption - you are after all amongst the first."

"You did not care that you were hurting me; I read it in your mind." Grailem replies, the hatred he feels for this woman rising to the surface. His anger reaches into a part of his brain that he had been unaware of; as he feels his mind drifting forward towards the Professor.

Entering her mind is as easy as walking and he senses a damaged area in her brain; it is a tumour that is slowly strangling her blood supply. Finding he has the ability, he helps the tumour do its work by enlarging it and backs out hurriedly from her mind.

Professor Marian Florentia looks at Grailem angrily as she dies silently and slumps to the floor.

Grailem calls the medics on the internal phone who arrive within a few minutes. As they try to resuscitate her one of the medics questions him intently. Grailem looks suitably solemn as he explains that she just passed out in front of him. He explains that she had been telling him of her latest findings and assumed, with a shrug of his shoulders, that the excitement was probably too much for her.

The medic who had been trying to resuscitate her gave up and passes a body scanner over her. The scanner detects the abnormality of the tumour in the brain and Grailem is questioned no more as they carry her away.

Killing the Professor brought a feeling of justice to Grailem, he did not interpret the feeling as pleasure but revenge on someone who had tortured him for so long; did bring a certain amount of satisfaction.

The power of being in control of the life of anyone who crossed him went to Grailem's head. Drunk with power he decides to kill all those who had done him wrong; and any who got in his way.

Needing no weapons and it being nearly midnight, he visited the private quarters of his carers and scientists. Entering each room silently he killed the sleeping forms using fingers that are harder than high pressure cobalt; and arms that had a crushing force of thousands of kilogram's. Killing everyone in the huge laboratory complex Grailem found the biggest obstacles to him were the people with prosthetic limbs and organs; as they could almost match him for strength and agility.

Many of the modified humans were awake when he entered their rooms. The prosthetic limbs that were incorporated into their bodies were powered by their own atomic power supplies. With only the power of thought to operate them, physical demands on the body were slight.

Grailem's first encounter was with a young female, aged about thirty five years. When he opened the door to her room and stepped inside she looked up at him from her work desk in shock and

fear. Seeming to know his intention she leapt towards him, fingers shaped into crooked talons. Swiping at Grailem's face with her sharpened nails they embed themselves into his cheek as she tries to pull downwards.

The tough carbon hybrid skin covering his body hold them fast and Grailem grabs hold of her wrist. Twisting it almost casually he snaps the wrist with a sharp cracking sound and the carer screams in pain. Grailem stiffens his fingers and pushes them into her chest, penetrating the heart and silencing her instantly.

Footsteps sound in the corridor outside as scientists and carers, alerted by the screams run towards her room. Stepping behind the doorway Grailem is not seen as four stockily built carers rush in. Seeing the dead woman laying on the floor makes them stand still in horror.

Recognising the four carers as ones who had abused him the worst Grailem shuts the door with a slam. Turning swiftly they face him white with fear.

Jobe, the biggest and cruellest is the first to recover and he rushes at Grailem with clenched fists swinging at Grailem with all his might. Grailem effortlessly catches the oncoming fist in his right hand. Squeezing Jobe's hand he increases the pressure until the bones shatter and break. Jobe lets out a terrifying scream as the other three carers rush at Grailem.

Surrounding him they start to punch and kick Grailem as hard as they can – intending to kill him.

Grailem feels no pain under the hail of kicks and punches, reaching out he grabs the neck of two of the carers in each hand. With an effortless twist of the wrist he snaps their necks and drops them to the floor.

The remaining carer, now white with fear tries to get out of the door, turning the handle he feels himself pulled backwards as Grailem grabs hold and throws him against the far wall. The carer hits the wall with a mighty thud and slides down onto the floor.

Grailem wants to hurt this man and make him suffer like he had suffered over the years. Leaning forward he rips the carers trousers off and getting hold of the man's small penis he uses his sharpened nails to slice right through it. Throwing the penis down onto the floor Grailem straighten his fingers, positioning them above the area of the bladder with the intention of removing this also and he forms a cold smile at the terrified carer.

Heavy booted footsteps sound in the hall coming in his direction and Grailem assumes it is the security force on the way – who are probably armed. Taking a final look at his terrified victim Grailem turns away and runs at the nearest window. Leaping up he crashes through the window and lands on the ground four stories below.

Scientists and carers run as soon as they see him and soon Grailem finds himself all alone. Turning back towards the laboratory he enters by a side door and searches for the scientists and carers who have hidden from him. Two hours later and after setting fire to the huge laboratory complex as he leaves, he manages to escape in the confusion. Heading for the nearby city he rents a room in a poor section using the money he had taken from his victims.

Chapter Three

His body was a perfect copy of a human's; apart from hair growth, and he found that he could move amongst the population anonymously. The eyes were the only thing that could tell him apart, unless a scanner was used on him. The eyes remained cold and staring, irrespective of whatever emotional state he was in. Grailem purchased a light shaded pair of sunglasses, enough to distort the image of his eyes but not dark enough to make him appear out of place.

Impressed with his strength and ability to easily kill those around him Grailem felt that his rightful position on this planet was to be President. Though he felt immortal and impervious to any form of attack he planned his future moves carefully. The main problem he had come across was those people that were fitted with artificial limbs and body parts. Using the vast computer network that covered the planet he found it easy to locate those who had fully replaced limbs and organs. Medical records on this planet were public knowledge, by accessing the hospital computer banks

Grailem was supplied with the information on all operations over the past twenty years – complete with names, addresses, marital status and employment records.

Civilisation had evolved and matured with a heavy reliance on computer technology. Only military information was restricted; including the laboratory and location in the desert where the other human brain experiments were carried out.

Systematically Grailem started to kill those who had the technological and prosthetic advancements that were most likely to oppose him in the future. Most that he murdered, he created the situation where the death looked accidental or like suicide. Many fought to save their lives and caused extreme damage to their homes – dispelling the theory that it was a suicide.

Grailem knew that his time was running out, in his five day killing spree he had killed nearly ten thousand people making it obvious to the authorities there was a mass killer on the loose. Knowing it was Grailem with his superior abilities and who was able to hide and merge with the population, made catching him almost impossible.

For another three weeks Grailem continued his reign of terror, his confidence in himself and his powers made him feel indestructible. Killing became easy and he admitted, enjoyable. His twisted mind, coupled with the deep hatred he felt for his own species strengthened the genetic alteration with the alien species of wasp.

The mistake the geneticists had made when combining the wasp genes into Grailem's system was that they used the genes of the queen of the species. The queen's objective, being the dominant species on the alien planet, was not only to reproduce, but also to totally dominate the thousands of wasps that also lived in her colony and on the planet. The wasp colony, guided by the dominant queen, invaded nearby wasp and bee colonies. They attacked mercilessly, killing the queen of that colony and as many of the adult wasps and bees that opposed them.

Enslaving the survivors and the important eggs the dominant wasps created a slave culture. Showing almost human intelligence huge cities had built up which the inferior wasps maintained. Waiting on the dominant species life for the lower form of wasps was grim and allowed no freedom.

The genetic make-up of the queen wasp was very similar to humans; only a two percent difference, making it ideal for scientific research. The aggressive dominant nature of the wasp was ignored and considered of no importance.

With the genetics of the alien wasp dominating his thoughts Grailem continued his intended domination of the planet. Being on his own made him stronger, more independent and narrow minded. His one thought was domination of the planet – no other thought entered his head – other than how he was going to kill his next victim.

Killing became easier each time he murdered, this being a peaceful, placid world violence was rare and unexpected. Most of his victims froze with fear when he attacked and accepted his death blows as if they wanted to die. Grailem became complacent and approached the apartment of his final victim with a certain amount of sadness. He had enjoyed killing and hoped that in the future his slaves and servants would rebel against him; so that he could kill again.

Ringling the doorbell to his final victim Grailem waits patiently for the door to open. The door opens showing a small balding man, possibly eighty years of age. Being small, Grailem badly underestimated the man before him called Stoney Brooks. Claspings the man's neck he twists his hand sharply, expecting to break it in one easy snap. Medical records had shown that Stoney had prosthetic arms, legs and heart; but had not shown that his spine was made of a tough titanium alloy.

Stoney Brooks reacts instantly and throws Grailem over his shoulder onto the floor. Running over to the main door he triggers the intrusion alarm which is connected to the main security that covers the building. Stoney fights like a madman using his prosthetic arms and legs; such is the power in his arms he grasped Grailem in a bear hug so tight that it traps Grailem's arms to his side.

The elbows of Stoney Brooks are reinforced with a bulbous formation of titanium and these force themselves into Grailem's elbow joints. The elbow is one of Grailem's weak points and the bulbous titanium locks in causing serious damage to the two main servo-motors that power his arms. Grailem still manages to force his hardened fingers into Stoney's chest, stopping his heart as his servo-motors and safety system shuts down.

All of Grailem's parts are self-renewing but this takes time, the damage to his servo-motors in

effect disabled him and his arms become immobile. He hears a hammering on Stoney Brooks' apartment door before it is kicked down a few seconds later. Armed security forces rush in and brutally force him onto the floor. Hand and ankle cuffing him they leave him lying on the floor as they call for back-up.

Aware of Grailem's capabilities and the thousands of people he had killed they tried many ways to kill him. His body, so well built, could withstand gunfire and even missiles. Connecting his body to the main electrical system and pumping five hundred thousand volts through him had no effect. Unable to destroy him, and aware that his self-repairing systems are working they encase him in hexi-plas, a combination of silica and carbon. Flying him to the spaceport the government and security officials remove the expensive satellite system payload that was due to take off and weld him inside the cargo hold. The government quickly blast him into outer space before his system manages to complete his repairs.

The repairs take twenty-four hours as Stoney had fractured both of the energy coils when he held Grailem's arms in his mechanical grip. Though not equalling Grailem's strength, the ball structure of his elbow joints had still managed to fracture the casing of the motors in both arms in his mighty crushing grip.

Regaining the use of his arms Grailem shatters the hexi-plas that surrounds him and tries to gain access to the control room of the rocket. As he had occupied the cargo hold at the front it was necessary for him to remove the reinforced wall that protected the sensitive navigation equipment. Gaining access to the controls proved to be no advantage; as the rocket had been pre-programmed.

Grailem's attempt at overriding the system results in a short circuit that ignites the remaining fuel. The rocket explodes in a ball of flame; the force of the explosion hurtling him into outer space. Due to the increased force provided by the explosion and propelled forward, Grailem was thrown into space at an incredible speed that almost matched the speed of light.

Needing no air or food his immortal body became a prison, a specially designed atomic powered heating system kept his brain at an ambient temperature – keeping him alive and conscious. The need for sleep also diminished, as he used little energy other than sight and thoughts and existence became a boredom of repetitive thoughts. His body, though designed to protect the brain from the rigours of the cold of space, could not propel or slow itself down. For thousands upon thousands, if not millions of years he drifted with only magnetic forces and dust clouds to slow or alter his course.

Keeping sane proved to be the biggest problem; for years he would drift along on a dream world of his own creation. Imagining the friends he never had and a desire to keep them changed his attitude towards the people who inhabited this universe.

The hatred he had felt had diminished and he realised it had been his undoing. The effect of the queen wasp gene had diminished once he found himself in space. With no other creatures to dominate, it had no purpose other than one of waiting for the next opportunity.

If he had not gone on an insane killing spree he would now be happy living with people of his own kind. His superior body and mind would have made him a natural leader and he no longer felt the desire for violence to achieve his aims.

Vowing to his god that he would lead a good life if he met other forms of life he prayed for release.

The release did not come, Grailem prayed for thousands of years in the belief that Good would triumph. Instead, confusion and misunderstanding filled his mind, and belief in a god diminished.

Surely with his improved body and mind and only doing Good a god would have a use for him?

The aimless drifting he had endured and the aimless drifting Grailem was to suffer in the future made him renounce a god; any god. There was no god, if there were, he or she would not have allowed him to suffer like this. The question of why he had been created nearly drives him to insanity.

Anger fills his mind and Grailem escapes his reality and creates a new dream world; one that is built around himself and his power, and where he becomes god and the master of the universe.

The magnetic field of the asteroid pulls Grailem into a tight orbit around it. This proves no great advantage as he cannot escape the magnetic field as the asteroid continues its own slow orbit around a distant sun.

Frustrated to be so close to a solid object yet unable to reach it and already close to madness Grailem utters his first sound in a thousand centuries as he screams. The sound, created by a mechanical device in his throat, expels no air and makes no noise in the vacuum of space; but the sound waves flying into space provide an energy that slightly alters his orbit around the asteroid. The movement is slight, only moving the orbit a quarter of a degree, but it is enough to show Grailem that he can at last move.

Positioning his body he screams like a child until he can feel the magnetic field strengthen as the asteroid sucks him towards it. Grailem's orbit is elliptical around the asteroid and if it wasn't for the atomic clock built into his system he would not have noticed its faint decay. Unable to move himself closer, no matter how much more he screams, Grailem has no choice but to wait for the orbit to decay enough for the gravitational field to finally pull him to the surface.

Chapter Four

Seventy five years later and the asteroid having orbited halfway around the sun, Grailem finally puts his feet onto a solid surface.

After a millennium in space the sensation is intense; even painful to the carefully manufactured sensors built below the prosthetic skin. The sensation brings hope, hope that he has a future other than one of aimless drifting in space.

All he has to do now is think of a way to get off this rock.

The asteroid is an oval shape and has a spin of its own. Spinning slowly it passes through space as it has done since the universe began. Grailem's weight increases the spin as he settles his feet onto the cold rock. Moving forward with the spin he balances on the end of the strange shaped asteroid.

Grailem's weight not only makes the asteroid spin faster it also increases its orbital speed. Moving around the piece of rock he learns that he can exert a certain amount of control over it. Altering its ancient orbit Grailem changes it so that it is aimed directly at the distant sun.

Calculating that he can increase the speed no more, Grailem settles down and waits. The millennia drifting in space had taught him patience and patiently he watches; and waits.

Time passes, even at the speed the asteroid is travelling, the vastness of space envelopes him and it is another fifteen years before he sees any of the planets. The outer planets look cold and inhospitable to him as he drifts past. The long coldness of space had made him wish for warmth; and the heat would also make his systems operate more efficiently.

As the asteroid continues its journey towards the sun Grailem sees his first spacecraft (apart from the one he was put inside). The craft is huge, at least three kilometres long and a kilometre in diameter made of a light absorbing material. Giving no reflection it appears as a solid black cloud, shutting out the light from the distant stars as it passes him by.

The spacecraft is going too fast for Grailem to be able to intercept it so he calculates its trajectory, back to its source. The spacecraft had come from a large planet that was heading towards him in its orbit around the sun.

Grailem cannot believe his luck; he only needs to make the slightest of orbital changes for the asteroid to intercept the approaching planet. The journey still takes a month of patient waiting before he sees a small spacecraft approaching.

On a collision course with the civilised planet the large asteroid would not completely burn up in the atmosphere. Enough would remain to cause massive damage and the ensuing dust cloud; if it struck dry land, could change the climate for years to come.

The small spacecraft, sent to alter the course of the asteroid was Grailem's way off this rock. Hiding himself in a small meteor crater he considers his best options; if the occupants of the spacecraft see him on the surface of the asteroid they could regard him as a threat. The possibility that at the least they would report their sightings of him to the planet below, make him consider a more devious approach.

Watching the spacecraft land on the centre of the asteroid from his hiding place, Grailem sees large cargo doors being opened. A crane arm appears carrying a three metre tube at the end of its shiny cable. Lowering the cylinder gently onto the asteroid the crane remains stationary as a tall suited humanoid appears at the edge of the craft.

Grailem had been so intent on watching the unloading that he had not noticed the small doorway in the side of the spacecraft. His lips form into an attempt at a smile as he sees the perfect situation for gaining access to the craft. The telepathic part of his brain played an important role in the dream world he had created in his mind and he had worked on improving this ability. His telepathy had matured and grown whilst he floated and dreamed in space and here was the first instance where he could try it out.

The tall humanoid walks to the cylinder and unattaches it from the cable as a companion joins him. Picking up the cylinder between them they walk away from the spacecraft and are soon lost to sight beyond the asteroids small horizon.

Grailem assumes they are going to place the explosive charge in the right position so that it will blast the asteroid into a safer orbit. Realising he may only have a small amount of time he stands and makes his way to the spacecraft. As he approaches it he detects the thought patterns of another humanoid who has remained inside the craft.

Influencing the humanoid's thoughts Grailem persuades him, without the humanoid realising, to think of happy days from his childhood. Lost in happy thoughts the humanoid does not see Grailem approach the craft and climb into the cargo bay. Hiding in a corner and in a safe place for when the crane is returned he patiently waits for the return of the two spacemen who positioned the explosives.

The crane is retracted into the cargo hold and the doors shut before the two humanoids return. Just a few minutes pass after Grailem has settled himself in the corner when the crane starts to move; bringing it in slowly the skilled operator lowers it onto large metal clamps. The clamps grasp the head and body of the crane, locking it into position as the cargo doors close behind it. Now locked in total darkness Grailem feels trapped and claustrophobic. After the aeons floating in space this confined dark area with no stars to see makes him panic.

Regaining control of his emotions he calms himself; simulating deep breathing, the natural reactions of the artificial body help to reduce the stress. An hour passes before the sound of the two spacers entering the craft arouses Grailem from a distant daydream.

It is another hour before the craft finally takes off and Grailem looks forward to being able to mix with other living creatures again. Learning that direct violence was not the way to gain control, he had re-evaluated his emotions during the drifting in space. Feeling that he had now achieved complete control of his emotions, especially his anger, he still dreams of taking control of the planet he is being taken to.

Hearing the spacecraft engines start up and feeling the faint vibration as the engines course through the hull makes Grailem relax; soon he will be amongst an advanced civilisation. Getting out of the spacecraft unseen will be a challenge; but once past that obstacle he can merge in with the population.

Feeling the craft slowing down relaxes him even more and he focuses on the telepathic part of

his brain. Grailem may have to create illusions and control a great many alien humanoids when they open the cargo hold; and he wants to be ready.

The spacecraft lands as slowly as it had taken off from the asteroid showing a high mastery of rocket science. Grailem closes his eyes in the darkness of the hold and listens to the sounds as the engine is shut down. The exiting of the crew appears as noisy as the engine, and soon he is left on his own.

Waiting for over an hour without hearing a sound he slowly forces the cargo doors open. Raising his head above the craft Grailem looks around and seeing that the hangar is empty of people; climbs out of the cargo hold quickly. Jumping down onto the hangar floor he walks towards some offices on the far side of the building.

Searching the offices he finds a pair of red overalls and a pair of hard red plastic type material shoes. Taking off the alien clothes which had survived the journey through space Grailem stands naked. The artificial humanoid body should fit the clothes well and he puts on the pair of bright red overalls.

The overalls do not fit; designed for someone who is over three and a half metres tall the overalls hang over him like an old sack. Using his fingernails, which are razor sharp, Grailem shortens the arms and legs and ties the pieces together, making a belt, which he ties around his waist.

Picking up the shoes he notices that they are many sizes too large, cutting and shortening the front of the shoe and welding the material together by using the compression force of his fingers Grailem feels he is ready. He has made the shoes slightly smaller than he intended and he has to carefully insert his feet so as not to split the material. Walking is not difficult as his legs, controlled by separate power systems would still function even if he had no feet.

Security around the small spaceport Grailem had landed on proved to be non-existent; most of the work of unloading and looking after passengers was taken care of by robots. The people all seemed to average a height of three and a half metres, with a well built muscular body that was mainly a greyish-white. The head was small, more suited to someone who was two metres or less. The large hands were in proportion to the large body which to Grailem's eyes looked artificial.

The robots were all similar in appearance; 'male' and 'female' robots appeared to have come out of the same mould. Made to look like the tall humanoids and appearing to have lived for twenty years by a clever crafting of the skin made them look almost real. The only difference in the robots was hair colour which came in either brunette or blonde. The 'females' are cast the same; appearing in their early twenties and either blonde or brunette. Their clothing is also similar as they wear a uniform of dark blue and purple.

Grailem notices that no security checks are made of the passengers from a flight that has just landed. With the help of robots carrying their luggage they leave the building. Feeling confident in the bright red overalls, though conscious of his short height he by-passes the checking in desks by simply walking past them. Making his way to the main doors he soon find himself outside in the sunshine of this new planet.

Boarding a bus that will take him to the city, the blonde 'male' robotic driver does not even look at him as he takes a seat halfway along the bus. Sitting down he appears a similar height to the other passenger's and finally relaxes and looks out of the bus window. The journey to the city along well designed highways only takes twenty minutes. The vehicles are all driven by the young looking robots and Grailem is impressed by the orderly way the traffic is controlled.

Arriving at the bus depot he gets off the bus with the other passengers as the robotic driver stares straight ahead. The journey from the airport was obviously free and Grailem wonders if this society uses money.

The other passenger's stare at him as he stands on the pavement wondering where to go next. His obvious lack of height is not his only difference from those around him. The tall muscular bodies around him also contains a large stomach which makes the females appear pregnant. If it wasn't for the males to have similar, if not larger stomachs, Grailem would have been convinced he was in the middle of a population explosion.

Eager to get away from the staring people Grailem enters a cafe and sits down as a brunette robot waitress, wearing dark blue and purple approaches; "What will be your pleasure sir?" she asks in a human sounding voice.

Hoping that coffee exists on this planet Grailem asks; "Coffee?"

A mechanical smile forms on the face of the waitress; "Will that be deep grown or solarised?" she asks in an infectious attractive voice.

Grailem does not know what the robot means so replies curtly; "Solarised."

The waitress, unaffected by his abruptness, turns away and walks to the back of the cafe.

Returning about a minute later she puts a large mug of black liquid in front of him. Placing a small bowl of sweetener she portrays her mechanical smile and returns to the back of the cafe. Pouring the coffee into his mouth in one go, that leads to an empty receptacle container, Grailem puts the mug back onto the table and stands to leave.

The robot waitress pays him no mind until Grailem reaches the door where a camera drops from the ceiling and takes his picture; "Thank you for calling, please call again." says the waitress adding her mechanical smile.

Grailem turns his head and looks in her direction trying to cover the irritation of being photographed so soon. Nodding his head in acknowledgement he returns the same cold smile and steps out onto the street.

If this society functioned on personal identification, possibly retina recognition to spend their wealth and money; how was he going to make a living here?

Being mistaken for a humanoid, even though a short one, the robot shop assistants give him everything that he asks for; being photographed at every purchase. Within an hour Grailem, after several adjustments due to his height, had dressed himself in appropriate clothing and felt that he could now pass as a citizen of this planet. Feeling confident he buys three communications platforms and other electronic equipment which attracts no attention.

The only problem he encountered was trying to buy a weapon. No guns or knives, other than kitchenware, was available and after searching for many hours he had been unable to obtain any kind of weapon.

Aware of the surveillance systems in the shops and cafes he had visited he exits a large store to be confronted by twenty armed robots wearing light coloured uniforms and slim safety helmets.

This was not going to plan; he had shopped deliberately as a means of announcing his presence but had not expected such a forceful reaction. He had expected to be approached discreetly by a government official as his videoed picture had obviously not been recognised. With his profile not fitting, Grailem was obviously an alien; and by all appearances of the armed guards in front of him, not a welcome alien!

Holding his hands above his head, clutching the bag of electronic equipment, he puts the robot police at ease for a split second - which is all the time he needs.

Backing hurriedly into the store before the robots realise his retreat, Grailem turns and runs through the crowd of shoppers and assistant robots to the back of the store.

The robotic police are soon on his tail and follow him into the store. Seeing his retreating back as he steps through a doorway a police robot fires a stun pistol at him. The aim is perfect as the stunning force hits Grailem squarely in the back. If he had been human the blast would have knocked him unconscious, but having no effect upon him he steps hurriedly through the doorway which leads him into a large warehouse.

Running as fast as he can Grailem becomes a blur as he races along the aisles of goods until he reaches the large open warehouse door. Stopping in the huge doorway he looks out at the yard spread before him. Robot handlers load the waiting trucks. A robot is shutting the back door of one of the trucks and Grailem hurries towards it.

The robot workers totally ignore him as they continue their work and he reaches the cab of the loaded truck. Inside a male looking robotic driver with dark hair sits behind the wheel awaiting instructions. Grailem opens the passengers door and climbs in making himself as inconspicuous as possible on the floor.

The robot suddenly springs into life and starts the engine of the truck and drives forward out of the yard. Reaching the main highway the robot continues its fast speed as it fits neatly between two similar robot driven trucks and continues north-west.

Grailem cannot believe his luck; as the escape seemed too easy.

After several hours of driving the robot pulls the truck off the main highway and heads towards a

large city in the distance. As the truck reaches the edge of the city Grailem waits his opportunity and jumps out as it is turning a corner. Reaching the pavement in three steps, which is empty of tall humanoids, he walks along in the bright sunshine.

Badly needing somewhere to hole up and prepare for his next moves Grailem looks at the buildings and alleyways. Several streets later he finds what he is looking for; a disused building that stands back from the road. By all appearances the building was a shop many years ago and Grailem walks to the front door. Peering inside through the grubby windows he can see it is empty. Picking the lock is as easy as opening the door and he steps inside and shuts the door behind him without breaking step.

Empty dusty shelves surrounding the interior of the building confirm that this was once a store. Walking to the back of the building Grailem enters the storeroom; which also contains empty dust covered shelves. Peering out of the dirty windows he can see a large empty yard spread out before him.

Forming his lips into a facsimile of a smile, expressing his relief at finding the empty store as this will be the ideal location for him to work. His first urgent priority is to fit some kind of propulsion system to his mechanical body; Grailem has no desire to spend his life drifting helplessly in space ever again.

Chapter Five

A busy month follows as he improves the flaws in his 'perfect' mechanical body and re-designs his defensive mechanisms. Several kilometres from the empty shop an industrial estate containing engineering companies which supplies the materials, lathes and technology he requires. Night time proves to be the best as the humanoids work a strict day shift and robots are the only occupants.

Meeting humanoids on his way to and fro from the engineering workshops gives Grailem no problems. His telepathic ability has improved a thousand fold and he can easily convince those around him that he is not there. The humanoid minds are easy to control as Grailem has begun to realise – and that they have been under control all of their lives and not been aware of it.

Also built into his artificial body are electrical sensors and Grailem can detect any electronic source from more than fifty metres away. If the sensors had not been fitted, his freedom would have been very brief. Detecting the first two robot guards on the street corner by his sensors gives him sufficient warning; and the opportunity to use a side alley before being seen.

The robot security guards, made from the same mould as the civilian robots, wore a pale white slim fitting safety helmet. A thin shirt and trousers of the same coloured material covers their hard bodies and shiny alloy boots fitted with a soft sole, cover their lower legs and feet.

Being this pale colour tended to make them blend with the surrounding light coloured metal of the buildings, and standing immobile would make them more difficult to see. The security cameras that were placed at strategic points about the city were easy to avoid as the security forces had made no attempt to hide them.

The security on this planet appears excessive as on most street corners robots stand on guard or cameras are fitted. Whoever is in charge here wants to remain that way; and Grailem sees that he will have his work cut out for him for his own plans, for when he is to be in charge.

The control exerted over this planet was not quite complete and by all appearances badly planned; using back alleys and suburban roads he could easily avoid the security robots and electronic surveillance.

Learning from the vast computer communication system that covers this planet Grailem found out that a little over three billion humanoids existed here. This number had been calculated many thousands of years ago as the maximum amount the planet could support.

The planet was divided up into sectors which were all designed to be self-sufficient. In all of these sectors humanoid birth numbers were strictly controlled as food supplies were restricted and too many humans would upset the balance. Anyone producing more than they were allowed in a sector where the restrictions were enforced, had the extra child or children taken away to be terminated. Some sectors where population was high were limited to one child per couple. Other sectors however allowed two or even three children to be born per couple. Fulfilment of the breeding instinct and happiness it seemed depended not only where you lived, but when. It was a harsh rule but Grailem could see the logic in it as it prevented famines and ensured a good healthy population.

Installing a communications platform he had taken from a warehouse to the communications system fitted into the empty shop Grailem connects to the network that covers this world. Who controlled the communications network took many hours of searching due to many false leads. Grailem only comes up with one positive company name; Sirap Communications.

The Managing Director of the company, a large individual called Rames Sirap appeared to rule the company with a rod of iron. A lot of the information Grailem accessed were legal documents dealing with land and property cases relating to the company.

The list of Directors and Managers showed that they all had the name of Sirap and many lawyers who had been involved in these legal cases also have the same surname.

In this perfect world corruption does exist; with control of the planet by one family spells Dictatorship. Amazingly advanced with robots doing the manual labour Grailem wonders why the humanoid population have not rebelled against the family of rulers. Some unfair dismissal cases he came across seemed unusual and appeared to be the only kind of rebellion. These numbers were small only numbering a few dozen in the past one hundred years. With advancement of intelligence comes the natural desire for equality, which appeared lacking in this society; or maybe was severely repressed.

Searching the memory banks on the history of the Sirap company Grailem finds that much of it is either 'unavailable at the present time' or worse; 'The file you have requested is corrupt'.

The only really useful information he can collect on the Sirap Communications Company is that the Managing Director for the last three thousand years has been called Rames Sirap.

Did this mean that the name Rames was passed from generation to generation or was Grailem not the only robot with a human brain? Or was he dealing with a totally different alien being altogether?

As far as he was aware there were only a handful of his kind in existence; and manufacture of more was probably restricted by his killing spree on his home planet. Mankind was shocked by the amount of deaths he had caused and may have modified construction since then; or ceased production altogether.

If mankind had continued with their dream of immortality the future human brain could have been programmed more correctly. Implants of human thought patterns into microchip's had been in an early stage when Grailem had them fitted to his brain. This research would surely have continued, even in secret, and may have even been successful.

During his aimless voyage in space Grailem had lost track of time; he could have been drifting for a hundred thousand or even millions of years. During that time slowly drifting through the cold vacuum, mankind itself may have changed and evolved.

Aware that he may be up against a formidable enemy Grailem incorporates more weapons into his artificial body. He had already put the thrusters into the prosthetic calf muscles to enable him to move about in space. Powered by small atomic motors the thrusters used a source of protons as the propellant; as long as he was in range of a light source, however faint, the motors would continue operating.

Converting the mechanical hands and fingers into energy weapons takes a little longer. His hands and fingers still have to look normal so Grailem makes a life-like looking cap that will fit neatly over the finger tips. The barrels of the new phasers and projectile guns in the fingers are completely covered by the caps and he moves on quickly to the next task.

Fitting a mini grenade launcher into each cheek makes his face look fatter. Aware that he needed to change his appearance he had stolen some black dye and silicone several days ago from an engineering works.

Using the thick black dye to cover his brown hair Grailem does not forget the artificial eyebrows. Packing the cheeks out further with the clear silicone he inserts a large amount under the chin. Giving the appearance of a well-fed humanoid Grailem tries to form a smile; the smile looks false and mechanical and the eyes remain cold. More work would be needed before he can explore this new world.

Several weeks later in his new disguise Grailem approaches the new shiny building of Sirap Communications. Carrying a small black attaché case that holds his burglary kit and enough explosives to reduce the huge building to rubble, he steps through the main doorway.

A smiling female looking robot receptionist wearing the uniform of dark blue and purple greets him as he enters and asks him to step forward to the identifying scanner.

Grailem is prepared for this and knows scanners are used in all official buildings. Wearing prosthetic fingerprints and retina copies of a communications expert who lay dead at his workshop, he approaches the identifying scanner with confidence. It had been easy to re-shape the face and body to resemble the appearance of the expert, Alexander Finda and Grailem remains calm.

The scanner has a vital flaw in its programming in that it only scans retinas and fingerprints; if it had scanned the entire body or attaché case he would have no hope in carrying out the deception.

Easily passing the scanner test Grailem is shown towards a large elevator, as he steps inside, the receptionist pushes the button for the one hundred and forty fifth floor.

Determined to find out who ruled this planet Grailem had suspicions that it was the main company in charge of communications across the planet. Deciding to test his theory he had offered Sirap Communications a revolutionary device; when incorporated with any communication device it would also transmit all of the transmitted information to Sirap; without the user being aware.

He had forwarded initial plans and was convinced that Sirap Communications would eagerly accept this invention. The invention was not new as it had been created thousands of years ago by mankind. But on this planet Grailem had found no trace of such a device, though he knew that there had to be monitoring in some way. 'His' device had yet to be invented; and would enable complete knowledge and ultimate control of the population.

Stepping out of the elevator he is ushered into an office by a robotic receptionist in the mould of a blonde female wearing the familiar uniform of dark blue and purple. As he steps inside he sees a large table surrounded by smartly dressed executives. Sitting in leather bound chairs they all stare at Grailem expectantly.

The receptionist directs him to the far end of the room where a three dimensional projector stands beside a large white screen. The vague plans he had sent previously to Sirap had been in the three dimensional form. Expecting that such a projector would be available to him he had already prepared the sales pitch and technical details.

"Good morning Mister Finda." greets the grey haired man sitting at the head of the table; "Our company is very interested in your device; if it works as well as you claim."

"Yes it works, but it will involve an upgrade of all of your systems. Along with the device I have

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