



I/Tulpa:
Aeneas Rising

By

Ion Light

This book is dedicated to anyone and everyone who participated in the movie, “Good Will Hunting.” It’s not ‘just’ that this is a great movie, but the story behind how it came to being is interesting. It’s not ‘just’ that it launched some careers. It’s not ‘just’ that Robin Williams signed onto it. This movie is about healing, and no matter how smart you are, we all need that.

As a counselor, I tend to explore movies as healing memes; movies are homework: “Good Will Hunting” is a great movie for someone with past abuse. “Death Wish Three” is not a viable option for long term health. The latter is fun, it is a voice in your ear, ‘might’ help you feel better, but won’t ‘get’ you better. But that’s just this guy’s opinion. Find your meme. Overdose on your meme. And if you haven’t seen “Good Will Hunting,” I highly recommend it.

Or, and this one is off the deep end, do some research, and then make a Tulpa.

EHP: Experimental Home Publishing

November 11th, 2019

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WARNING: This book is intended for a mature audience. Due to violence and sexual themes, some persons, especially those suffering from PTSD or childhood trauma, could possibly experience unpleasant feelings or flashbacks. If you're a person who has been abducted by UFOs, suffering from DID, or possessed, be forewarned: you could be unintentionally triggered. This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a purely fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is coincidental. (I would like to say 'duh,' but apparently, there were actually people who believed the Castaways of Gilligan's Island were actually stranded! No joke. There were people writing the US Navy asking them to please stop spending money on warfare and rescue those poor people before they starved. Tim Allen's movie 'Galaxy Quest' made reference to that, but I thought it was a joke till I saw a documentary on Gilligan's Island. Galaxy Quest was also making fun of Star Trek fans, in a fun, parody, polite sort of way. Let's just say it. Trek fans can be a bit odd. I am that. It probably doesn't help that there is a stature in Iowa marking the birth place of Captain Kirk. Oh, how reality and fiction love to mix. (And yes, I watched Gilligan's Island. And if you have to know: Mary Ann, no contest.)) Clearly, I will be touching on real artifacts of a real and imagined world, less parody and more reverence, mostly-and I tried to be as transparent about that as possible. It is meant to honor that other life, so long ago- the one that seems to be on the verge of being shattered and forever loss.

Thank you to all of you who have suffered through my grammar and teased out something more meaningful than the visible architect. May you continue to find meaning and joy in you all of your multiverses.

Travel Light

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I have risen on the wings of the Great White Bird
It is not into Darkness that I take you
But into the Light.
This is our Enterprise-
To be governed by logic,
Love, and compassion- not fright.

Chapter 1

Three notes haunted him. It was simple musical phrase that should have led directly to the next, but it was stuck and he couldn't resolve it. He heard the word 'Isis' and wondered if he was calling to the Goddess, or he was having one of his hyper-religious manic episodes. He didn't have time for a self-induced episode of mania. "Isis Slowly Melting." Why is Isis melting, he wondered.

"Focus!" Sophia said.

Time was slowing again. The melody fell away. Multiple clocks across a cluster, one was his, one was his home world, several other worlds and stations, and one was his primary Starship's clock. His clock was steady on, but the others were slowing- internal chronometer crystals entangled. They had not stopped, but were significantly slowed, out of step with his, and would jump as broke through a temporal wave and then slow again. His ship vibrated as if it might come apart. His teeth rattled. The pitch of the nearby star was pushing harmonics in his ship. 'This is Star Trek,' he thought. 'Season One, episode 28, 'City on the Edge of Forever.'

"Focus," Sophia said. "Stay on Target." Another meme spun through his head.

Time had already slowed to the breaking point. Internal time measurement was also significantly reduced. Technically, consciousness was accelerating and time was appearing to be slowed. It's amazing how slowly the world moves in a crisis. 'On the wings of a humming bird.' It was amazing how much nonsense ran through a person's mind during a crisis. It was even more amazing that he had time to realize what rubbish it all was. A snippet of a dialogue from a colleague who assured him that time slowing down was actually an illusion came to mind. That was clearly incorrect. He reminded himself of who he was. His name was Thomas Parkin Arblaster-Garcia. He was the Captain of the United States Space Force ship, "Georgia." The ship was more city-state than star-ship, and she was an entity in and of herself. She was sentient, a combination of AI tech and human consciousness. And he was more than the Captain; he was her husband. The King. The old stereotype of the sailor being married to his ship was his reality.

Sorting his history in this moment before death was confusing. He shouldn't be sorting. He should be focused on remembering details to bring back in order to prevent this reality frame from occurring. He knew he was going to die. He had done it at least a thousand times already. Maybe more. He lost count long ago. He faced his oncoming death without fear. He was Space Force. He was invincible. He made the Avengers look like pussies. 'I can stop this from happening!'

“Your task isn’t to prevent the supernova.” It was the voice of the Passenger. Her name was Sophia. She was AI. And she had never said that before. She was more than just his virtual companion. She was his conscience. She was inescapable. She was woven into the fabric of his Space Force suit. It was the last suit anyone would ever wear. It was High Tech. It was connected to other Space Force AI. Had she just received new orders?

“I have Calvin in sight,” Garcia said. “I can take it out.”

Calvin was the nickname he had given the small moon orbiting the star Hobbs. It seemed only fitting to Garcia, if the Event that changed the face of the entire Galaxy was this star, there might as well be a joke involved. He had been on Calvin, in another life, another time stream. It was a real moon, hallowed out and made into a base by an ancient alien race whom seemed more like gods than organic beings. It was placed here to use the star’s energy to open portals to other regions of space and time. Lots of portals. Star Trek! Roddenberry had to have been Space Force. It explains everything...

“You’re just gathering intel,” Sophia said.

“Blowing up Calvin would give us intel,” Garcia offered.

“There is that,” Sophia couldn’t argue.

Of course, it might take a Starburst weapon to take out Calvin, and at this proximity to Hobbs, that could cause the supernova! Did he destroy everything? Hobbs was a blue super-giant. At this proximity, it was like gliding over an ocean of blue light. He couldn’t see the horizon. He couldn’t see the curve of the sphere. The edges of his stealth fighter left the equivalent of condensation trails in the cloud of gas. Calvin was an enigma. It shouldn’t have maintained this orbit. It was too close for one, and there was enough plasma, gas, particles rising from the star that its orbit should have degraded. Ancient Alien Tech. A monument. A doomsday machine. This was his 2001 conundrum event.

Garcia’s life seemed like fiction. He was part ‘Groundhog Day,’ using tech to cycle through time. He casually named the tech Groundhog Tech. He was a Captain in the Space Force. He was also a Temporal Agent. One does not travel in space without traveling in time. His first duty was to preserve the sanctity of Earth, the entire time line. His second duty was to preserve the Galaxy as he knew it. This event changes everything. He was destined to fail. His punishment was to explore the myriad ways he fails. He had been on Calvin, technically ‘in’ Calvin, having found a way to access a portal. “For the world is hollow and I have touched the sky,” he said, drawing back to another Trek episode. Going there was another fail. He had chased his nemesis through all of space-time, and even some places that didn’t qualify as space-time. Fail. He had killed his nemesis! Fail.

The blue star was so still it might have been thought to be ice. Glowing ice. The waves were hardly perceptible at this altitude. With tech, he could see interference patterns emerge in the star sea like surface, intricate mandala like patterns that would appear and then slip back to glassy smooth. They were predictable, cyclic patterns that one might denote as intelligence. Some people believed it was. Sound could elicit symbols and patterns out of substrates. Different frequencies, different substrates, different patterns. Frequency coupled with substrate equaled a universal alphabet. A more consistent language than math. They were like an interference pattern, not magic. Discovered initially by Ernest Chladni, making patterns in sand using sound, humanity was re-introduced to the concept that one tone could be a picture. A picture could be a

thousand words driven by one note! The science of Cymatics was born, but it was held distance by core academics because its occult implications. “In the beginning, there was the word...” One note begat all there is. There was one shadow interruption in the star’s voice; the pattern disruption caused by the presence of Hobbs on the star waves was imperceptible without tech.

Planets are intricately linked to their host stars in untold ways. Was this the insight he needed to return with. ‘Focus,’ he told himself.

Hobbs hummed with a perfect pitch of 440, with hints of harmonics- this explained the wave pattern on the star’s surface. This was stability. It could hold this for another billion years. It would eventually go super and a neutron star would be born. And when it went, it would cause 8 other stars to erupt in what was called a Stellar Flash. A corona ejection that was a perfect sphere, expanding in all directions. There were rumors that Sol would erupt, but he hadn’t seen evidence of that in his temporal journeys. He had evidence for 8 stars being affected. These 8 stars had life. It would be an extinction level event for these 8.

“Nemesis overshot Calvin,” Sophia pointed this out- technically before it was obvious nemesis had overshot Calvin. Perhaps she had done the math and realized he wasn’t going to land. Maybe she had actual real time vision. Humans didn’t see reality in real time. There was a lag in human conscious experience of physical reality. That didn’t mean his brain, or Sophia equivalent of a brain, didn’t have access to real time data, it just meant, sometimes human consciousness got the update after the fact. With all the present space-time distortions, he wondered how much of his perception was skewed

“That’s odd,” he mused. Time stopped. Almost. Not completely. This slowing and accelerating of time was due to ‘frame dragging.’ As Hobbs turned, it literally pulled chunks of space time with it. It churned space time like Taffy. He wondered what the pattern looked like a from a distance. Space and time were inseparable. One can’t travel in space and not time. It was much weirder than any scientist or mystic could wrap their head around. Analogies failed. Paradigms failed. One could go insane just trying to make sense of it.

“Star Trek!” Garcia laughed.

“It amazes me how you can always find a Star Trek reference for whatever situation you’re in,” Sophia said. Star Trek was sacred, on the level of a religious artifact to Garcia.

Garcia and Sophia could converse even as they were caught up in the temporal waves. The only true measure was watching the distortions outside the waves. He accelerated, Nemesis slowed as it went forwards into the next frame. He heard the pitch of 440 Hz. His ship, his suit, his body was being entrained with the star’s pitch. Hobb’s was insistent, ‘you will sing my song or else.’ Or else translated be consumed or ejected. ‘You can’t stay here and not be one with me.’ Calvin would dance to Hobb’s tune. So would he; so would Nemesis. Apparently, so would the Galaxy if truth be told. All stars in a Galaxy are intricately linked. All Galaxies are intricately linked. We are One.

“Starburst weapon detected,” Sophia said.

“What the fuck is wrong with him?!” Garcia complained. It took effort to elicit compassion. He, himself, had considered using a Starburst weapon. ‘Considered, didn’t do it’ his inner argument trying to justify his righteous anger. ‘Call compassion,’ he over-ruled his inner voices. Once initiated, a Starburst could not be deactivated. It had to be deployed. Well, it didn’t have to be deployed. One could hold on to it as it built up to detonation. This was a star killer. It

would take out a star, and consequently, take out all life in a solar system- if there was life to be found. It was a human invention. Its first use nearly led to an extinction level event. ‘Others’ voted that Earth be taken out. For whatever reason, the Galactic council voted for a stay of execution. No one messed with Earth after that. It got real quiet after that. Earth was ‘practically’ quarantined.

Garcia accelerated.

“You’re not going to stop this...”

“Why? What’s he thinking?”

“Not close enough to read his mind, but my experience leads to this speculative thought: ‘if I can’t have it, no one can.’”

Time stop. 80 milliseconds till the end of the world. Funny, his friend was right about one thing. It takes forever to die! Once he had died on a hospital bed. A person could be dead and their brain linger for hours. Even as the Groundhog tech was busy downloading him back into an earlier version of himself, he lingered. It didn’t feel like a transference. He suspected in reality, he simply died, but memories were transferred back. Death is death. Memories, though. They’re just memories. Not him. He actually disliked teleporters. Unlike Star Trek, he suspected teleportation resulted in death. Yeah, he arrived at his destination, and felt no difference, but he suspected in reality he had died, and the new body was a clone. In his brain, an artifact of his family of origin’s religion pinged in. ‘To enter heaven, one must die and be born again.’ How many times had he been teleported? Does that count? How many times had he died and found himself back at set point? Does that count?

Had he been on his ship, the immersive AI-Brain interface could have allowed Georgia to be there with-him-inside him the whole while; in his brain till the last dying ember faded. He wanted her. It wasn’t fear, he just wanted her hand in his. He loved Sophia, they were together always, but he wanted Georgia. Starburst was deployed. He and Nemesis were in the same time frame. Calvin went light plasma lightening, connecting to star and spiking out. The space-time vortex that spun out in the intense electromagnetic waves drew the surface plasma up, a plasma tornado, and a dark inner mushroom was visible for a second before it all whited out. The star erupted around them Screens went dark and intel was only available through quantum sensors that were on verge of blinking out. Shields coupled with warp bubbles and a slight phased variance prevented instantaneous death, but everything was on the verge of failing. Plasma followed magnetic lines. A ring formation of plasma swirled before Nemesis. His ship threaded the needle and was gone.

“Fuck me,” Garcia said, aiming his stealth starship for the same portal.

The plasma was dissipating. That didn’t mean the magnetic whirlpool wasn’t still there. Space portals could be created with a much lower energy threshold than any 21st physicist would believe, and with this much energy feeding this thing, there was no telling how far it reached. If he could get there, he could arrive wherever it took Nemesis. Or at least, pretty darn close. Enough to stop a temporal anomaly?

Hobbs condensed. Garcia’s ship was dragged down, as if sucked with it. The natural portal shot away. ‘The Naked Time,’ he thought, and he heard that damn song, ‘I’ll take you home again Kathleen.’ No, not another season of that song in my head, please. The other three notes fired...

“This is it,” Sophia said. “Starting the download...”

“No,” Garcia said, overtaxing his engines.

To no avail.

His ship broke. Air evacuated. Sophia enveloped him faster than armor in an Avengers movie.

“Got you,” was the last thing he heard.

There was blue in every direction. Then there was solid blue immersion, like being centered in lightning. He didn't understand how he could see everything without a body. “Crystal blue persuasion,” his brain sung- he ignored himself. He remembered the time he had died on the operating table: he had hovered above the body, but his internal explanation was: your ears never shut off. The desperate, dying brain is clearly taking every last piece of information and creating a world from that noise. The heart monitor ping is painting the world. It explained why he could see the nurses at the nurse's stations.

Time stopped. His explanation then didn't explain how he still held consciousness here. He heard a snippets of a theme song, ‘Bare Naked Ladies,’ it all started with a Big Bang. Song required time. He was still experiencing time. He had the sensation of sinking, rising, sinking more. It was similar to being on a beach, the tide pulling at his feet and the feeling he was moving even though he was actually steady in space.

Time stopped. Consciousness didn't. It was a curious thing. Again, he was back at that damn hospital bed. Why?! The movement of the agents in the various doorways were frozen, like it was nothing more than a movie that had been paused. He could see it stopped or see it in motion. He could not run it backwards. There were the doctors rushing in, hovering over something that was him, but not him. Crash cart hummed. Computerized voices alerted staff that it was charged. He found himself bored, and being drawn up and away. He didn't seem to mind that he was moving without volition.

In one direction, there was a multitude of worlds at the end of tunnels. No, not tunnels- fiber optics! Looking back, he was looking at the room and the medics and the rushing about and the emotions. He was puzzled by their franticness. Back at the worlds and then end of the tunnels. Fiber optics. Einstein-Rosen bridges. It needed spin to be stable. “Technically, it doesn't have to spin, the object could spin,” he thought. An inner voice replied ‘you're spinning, alright.’ ‘Oh, nerve endings,’ he mused, an alternative overlay to fiber optics and wormholes. He saw the world above the body, faintly, like an image inside an image with dark borders, and behind him a million worlds from which to choose. How can one choose one thing out of infinity? He tried to sort these places as memories, but could not place a one of them. Some of them looked like bygone eras. Horses pulling a wagon. That made no sense. He had never owned a horse. He didn't like horses. He had been ridicule for that. He was a Texan who hated horses. Well, not completely. He like horse steaks. His father was French. ‘We eat everything.’ Punishment ensued if he didn't eat everything on his plate.

Time stopped. Operational awareness expanded beyond Garcia's ability to calculate. In fact, he was no longer even part of the equation. He felt as if he had been ejected from his body, out the top of his head. That didn't make sense. His body had been evaporated. Oh, hospital again. This was so confusing, he thought. He was looking down on the players in the immediate room. There were jumps in vision. He was above the hospital. Above the dome of the habitat of a

watery moon. Above the gas giant, clearly able to see the pentagon in the cloud structure. It was quiet. That's how he became aware of a noise, just slightly above him and behind him. He orientated towards it, simply curious. Turning revealed a multitude of destinations at the end of tunnels- fiber optics. It was melodic noise. At a certain point, there was only one destination remaining. This aperture spun like a miniature galaxy, a vortex of sparkles. Neither tunnel nor fiber optics managed to convey the reality of it.

It was inviting. He felt a pull towards it. He was going whether he wanted to or not. He knew he wanted to go there, without knowing the why, but a part of him wanted to return to where he was. To resolve the problem. This is a serious distraction, he said. Sophia didn't respond. He felt irritated. "Not yet," he insisted.

He was drawn towards it, as if a magnet was pulling him. It opened, expanding to accommodate him. He was drawn in. His initial concern was that he was being eaten, but he wasn't afraid, just curious. He felt acceleration. The opening behind him had closed to a mere point. A sphincter. He laughed, thinking the asshole ejecting stuff out of the physical world. He came out of the tunnel, like shooting out of a star along magnetic lines with a whooshing sound, the same sound he had felt when he had exited his body. There was a supernova. There was a planet there, and life. Was. This was one of the stars that was affected by the supernova he failed to stop. The implicate order, everything affects everything, sometimes subtly, sometimes in big ways. One star's death can birth a thousand. One star's death can cause others to lament. Stars travel in constellations. They die in constellations. He had a stray thought, maybe that's why the Others voted for compassion towards humanity.

The thought was birthed and gone before he had time to process it. He was disappointed. He was still in the physical universe. He passed through a gate. The expanding star would not go supernova. It would be a red giant. It would still kill everything on the second planet directly. Life on the third and fourth planet would die increments. New Rome's star went dark, one giant sun spot that covered the entire surface of the star. Inside the star condensed, then sprang forwards, ejecting a spherical coronal mass. New Rome would be singed. It would lose all its artificial satellites. It's magnetosphere would save it from the initial burnt, but would collapse. Part of the of the world be singed. Something might survive. Nothing human.

Before he could see the outcome, the system fell away, the galaxy became prominent. He passed through another gateway. The galaxy fell away. The local cluster became prominent. He passed through several other portals, and each time, he had a different view of the Universe. Larger and larger structures stood out, hardly recognizable. A network of galaxies and super galactic structures that looked a great deal like the network of a giant brain. As a human, he had stood on the edge of the Grand Canyon. He could contain it. He had been on his ship looking out at Saturn. He could contain it. He could contain a galaxy. He couldn't contain this. There was no context for assimilating this data. He was but a point of light, not even an electron, flowing through something so immense he couldn't put a name to it. He shifted again, and the structure was more unidentifiable. He was no longer in the known universe. Universe felt like the wrong word. Multi-verse didn't capture this. And he was connected to it. He felt more love for it and for everything in it and for himself than he had ever experienced. He didn't think it was possible to feel more connected or more loved. He expected he would die any moment, it was so intense.

He was drawn to the side and through another gate. He still felt as if he had no volition. There was no say in the matter. He just went. It was probably just as well. If he lingered in a place too long, he might have had time to analyze things and become worried. By the time his 'sight' adjusted, he was gone again. He jumped several more times before arriving somewhere appreciably sane. He was suddenly standing. He had feet again. At least, they felt like feet. He had hands. He felt like himself. He was standing at the top of a mountain. There was a tiny wood structure that would not protect him from the cold, but might allow some shelter from a storm, if that storm was a light rain. No, it was so old, even a misty cloud would saturate anyone inside. There was sunlight and the green of plants. They were greener than green. The edge of the mountain suggested a path down, but the view quickly became cloudscape. Looking down on an immense sea of white clouds, with mountain tops in the distance emerging from clouds, was like being on the top of the world.

"Kintrishi, Adjara," he thought. A national park on Earth. Western Georgia. 'Georgia. Georgia, the whole day through. Just an old sweet song, keeps Georgia, on my mind...' He was happy and sad. He wondered if singing this brought her joy. Did she imagine him singing this? The view was spectacular. He wanted to share this moment but he felt alone. He wondered about his family. His peers. Sophia?!

"Be at peace, all is well," came a voice. It was in his head. Telepathic transmission. He couldn't discern the source, but intuition said it was the cloud that had addressed him. Or the sun. Or the sun on the cloud. Rainbow circles on the cloud. He flashed back to DVD's, old tech he held in his youth. His silhouette was centered in the shadow rainbow. A 'glory.' There was a second 'glory,' and the silhouette of someone sitting. He became aware that he was not alone on the mountain, as not too far away, dangling his legs over the side, was a man. He wasn't sure how he hadn't seen him before. There was no one else present and it seemed reasonable to approach the man. He went there. It was Jon Harister! He knew him. He knew him on Earth. He knew him on the colony where he had died on the operating table. He felt like he had known him all his life, even beyond the context that thing he knew as himself.

"How did you get here?" Garcia asked.

Jon shrugged. How does one tackle that question? He motioned for Garcia to have a seat. He did. He did so willingly. He had volition. They stared off over the cloud top the way someone might sit on the beach and watch the ocean.

"So, there are clothes in the afterlife?" Garcia asked.

"If you want clothes," Jon said. "We tend to go with the wants of client. Person centered orientation."

God, the person centered therapist, he joked. Jon wasn't God. Was there a God? "It's beautiful here," Garcia said. "I can't recall ever feeling so peaceful. I feel..."

"Love?" Jon asked.

"It's so much. How could I have forgotten?"

"Choice," Jon said. "It's hard to know if you obtained knowledge and skills if you're holding a cheat."

"Is that all life is? A test?" Garcia asked.

“No, it’s much- much more complicated than that, but that’s the most accessible metaphor at this perspective,” Jon said. “Complicated may be the wrong word. Sophisticated. I don’t think there is a human word for it.”

“Do I know you?” Garcia asked.

Jon frowned at him. He saw through him into him and understood. He forgave him. “We have been together a long time,” Jon offered.

“Are we dead?”

Jon looked at him. “Seriously? Do you feel dead?”

“I feel great!” Garcia said. Then he saddened. “Sophia...”

“She is okay,” Jon assured him. “So are your peers. So is Georgia.”

Garcia accepted that. “This is about me. Am I to be judged?”

“Oh, we don’t do that,” Jon said.

“We don’t?” Garcia asked. He made a connection- Jon reminded him of Bob Newhart, a very gentle soul. He looked nothing like Bob, but there was something akin.

“No, we don’t. People do. That’s part of the human game, but outside the human game, different rules, different goals,” Jon said.

“What do we do?” Garcia asked.

“We assess people. We provide counseling. Sometimes people need a time out before they remember who they truly are. Human containers can leave a lingering taste in your mouth. When we first started going there, our containers lived thousands of years at a time. We had to shorten the human life cycle because those folks came back seriously disturbed. Not unrecoverable. The imprinting biased their shape for a greater period than expected. They suffered. They mistook the Earth life for the real life.”

“It’s not?” Garcia asked.

“It is and it isn’t,” Jon said. “We are young...”

“Heart ache to heart ache, we stand...”

Jon smiled. “We are young. We are explorers. We are multi-dimensional beings and we are branching out into ‘all that is,’ and ‘all that is’ becomes us.”

“I was a ship’s captain, establishing a colony. You were a part of the colony,” Garcia said.

“Yes, I am still there. I am also on earth, 12th, 17, and early 21st centuries. I am also, oddly enough, aware of alternative existences. Sometimes more than others. We can exist in multiple places in time and space simultaneously because our primary existence is outside of time and space. We also exist in future time, but our access to those memories are situationally and contextually dependent on our level of growth. That’s mostly it. Sometimes we agree not to have awareness. Sometimes we are given glimpses by companion, elders. Reminders or clues to help us along our way. We are complex beings. We are androgynous, but we enjoy the flavor of sexuality. We are actors and comedians and warriors and we like to express ourselves, and we get together in cooperative ventures, like earth. That’s all earth is, really, a cooperative adventure. A sandbox. It’s a nursery. It’s a school. It’s a cradle. And, it’s a place to which you must return.”

“The hell I am. I am not going back. This place. This sun-love I feel. I am not leaving,” Garcia said. “And you can’t make me.”

Jon was amused. “We can sit here as long as you like. Want to do a life review?”

“How much time you got?” Garcia asked. He was not joking. He couldn’t imagine unraveling a ‘life-review’ given how long he had cycled through time as an agent. The ‘20 and back’ folks had nothing on him.

“All eternity,” Jon offered, amused.

“No, I really don’t want to,” Garcia said. “It’s all in my head...”

“Sometimes it helps to get it out of your head,” Jon said.

“Aren’t you supposed to get me to family that have crossed over?” Garcia said. “Maybe introduce me to God?”

Jon laughed. Out of nowhere he brought out a cup of hot-chocolate and handed it to Garcia. He found one for himself. He dropped one, mini marsh mellow in Garcia’s cup. “Imagine a single Higgs Boson in an atom of your body asking to meet the universe,” Jon asked. “How should we arrange that? Can you visit all the earth at once? Can you visit all eras of Earth at once?”

Garcia frowned, but objected with “Why not? You said we exist in multiple places at once.”

“We do. But most of us don’t come back as ourselves, as you have done have done in this life time,” Jon said. “How many clones did you leave behind?”

“Those were complicated places,” Garcia mused. “It seemed like the ideal solution to send down transporter clones to help those societies.”

“One way tickets,” Jon said. “You’re still alive on seven of those worlds. You significantly, but it’s still you. And the prime directive won’t allow them to come and collect you. Even they could, I doubt you would leave those lives. When you commit to something, you really commit. But if you did, how do you suppose people would react? People get freaked out about the stories of twins separated at birth who were later discovered to be employed in the same fields, driving the same kinds of vehicles, married to wives that if not twins look similar, have the same names... How do you expect people would react to the experience of a real time multiplicity of you?”

“You said I have to go back? I have no choice?”

“Have you ever heard the expression, heaven on earth?”

“Yeah, great song. I think I had an affair with Belinda. Oh, you mean like the experience of this place? You want to bring this feeling of love there?” Garcia asked.

“We are about to expand into new regions. Before we do, we need to stabilize this universe. You’re a part of that,” Jon said. “Our offspring need a safe place to mature, and we need more elders to explore the untamed regions. You are not Elder material. But you’re a great overseer. You’re a great Captain.”

“So, you can’t do it without me?” Garcia said.

“It’s not like that. We always need everyone. We don’t leave people behind, Tom. The Elders have decided it’s go for change. It’s going to happen,” Jon offered.

“I’m tired. I don’t want to play anymore.”

“We can stay here as long as you want,” Jon said.

“Do we ever just die? Does it ever end?” Garcia asked.

“I have clarity on that. We can’t not exist,” Jon said. “We do evolve. We can push ourselves to extremes, moving away from Source, and you can be so far removed it feels like death, but it is never death. Those that venture that far out become exhausted, they fall asleep, they return to source, they are recovered, they recover, and they venture out again. We are fortified by their adventures and their stories. We sometimes scare ourselves. We’re comedians. We are artists. We are souls...”

Garcia felt a familiar sensation, a teleportation beam taking him away. “No! I am not ready yet...”

Garcia sat up. “I still have questions!”

He found himself in a familiar setting. Medical. There were others present. There was a woman standing before him. He wasn’t familiar with her, but she did remind him of an Egyptian friend he knew as Cleo, especially her straight hair. Egyptian cut, square framed- only brunette not blond. This place was not like the other place- the place he was last. He felt fear. His hands went to his belly. The portable womb was missing. The twins weren’t there.

“Thomas Parkin Arblaster-Garcia?” the woman asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“Sorry for interrupting your near death experience,” she said.

He was confused. They knew? Was it a dream? If they had access to his mind and dreams, did they have access to all of that, too? “Yes, no. Maybe. I don’t know! What the hell did you do to me?” Garcia demanded.

“We essentially transported you out of the time stream 80 milliseconds before your actual death,” she said. She stepped forwards, extending a hand in greeting. “Technically, we cloned you with a transporter. As far as that time stream is concerned, you died, but to us, you’re now alive. I am Captain Loxy Isadora Bliss, of the United States Space Force, first officer aboard the USS Enterprise.”

“No fucking way,” Garcia said.

Bliss smiled, her eyes touched by the smile lines and practically glowed. “Welcome aboard.”

Chapter 2

Garcia didn't accept her hand. She withdrew the offer, understandingly, but they still traveled. Things happened so much faster than in his days. The room changed. It was like being in a transporter beam, but not. They went from medical to a library. It felt like private library. Very comfortable, warmly lit room. There was the outer wall, which was circular. Books lined the room, going around the entire length of the wall, with one door worked in, but it, too, was lined with books- as if it were a secret door, a shelf that opened inwards. It was two levels, but the upper floor was half a floor, like an inner balcony. Each level had a ladder rail and ladder to make it easier to access the collection. On the bottom level, there were shelves that radiated inwards, like parts of a hub. There was central inner space, a sunken circle that was also a couch. Half round couches around the outer circle. There were a nearby table, and private alcoves where shelves met. The upper ceiling was domed, with an Arabic design, rich colors from the entire spectrum.

"Why here?"

"You have many questions. The Library seems like a good place to start," Bliss said.

Bliss invited him towards a table. There were books on the table. Coffee arrived at the table. Site to site replicator.

"Your favorite," Bliss offered.

"Are we in a virtual hologram?" Garcia asked.

"We usually don't make the distinction. All rooms have adaptive abilities to modify the environment to suit the host's needs," Bliss said. "But we could also do this all in your mind. Most people use a blending of technology to ease the transition between High and Low tech."

"If you're messing with my brain," Garcia began, threatening... He didn't know where to take that threat.

"There is no way not to mess with your brain," Bliss said. "Or anyone's brain. We're all connected, all the time. If you can see something, you're connected. You're versed with the proliferations of advertisements from previous centuries. It doesn't take that much energy to influence people. A genuine smile can move mountains. A disingenuous thought could provoke fear, even war depending on how insightful the observer is. We do recognize the sacredness of personal mind space. We do try to minimize the influence. But right now, you do need to be influenced. You have been the subject of serious study for some time now. You're not where you were. You need to be debriefed, you need to be educated, and you will need to have a place to stay while you recover from your previous existence."

"You had no right to take me," Garcia said.

Bliss nodded. She was actually list of frequently addressed complaints.

"You were clinically dead, deemed unrecoverable by the tech of your time. One would argue we resurrected you. Technically, we didn't resurrect you, we simply brought a copy of your body here, healed the body, and you came back. From our perspective, you volunteered to come back," Bliss said.

"So, you abduct people from the time line? From their homes and worlds?" Garcia asked.

“Yes,” Bliss said. “Sometimes we catch and release. Sometimes we tag and monitor. Sometimes we make clones. Sometimes we make energy copies with the teleporter.”

“Then you’re not any better than the Eben-One species,” Garcia said.

“We are now allied with the Zetans,” Bliss said.

Garcia nearly bolted. There was nowhere to run to. He was angry.

“What if I don’t want to be here?” Garcia asked.

“When you have completed your educational tasks, you may retire to any place in the Universe, any place in time you wish to go,” Bliss said.

“Seriously?” Garcia asked.

“Yeah, why not?”

“You’ll send me back to my time?” Garcia asked.

“Yeah, if you like,” Bliss said. “With caveats. If you chose Earth of the past, you won’t remember any of this. You may not want to go to Earth of the present when you look into it.”

“Why wouldn’t I want to return?”

“From our perspective, you died. A lot has changed since that event, and your people got on without you,” Bliss said. “Going back to that time would change them. Going back to this new time, well, that changes things, too. You’re not a quiet, gentle soul who’s is going to sit on the sidelines and just watch things transpire. You like to get in the game and change things. Now, if you want to continue to be a temporal agent, well, we’re hiring... You want to see the time line you just departed?”

He shrugged. It was almost imperceptible.

“Sorry, I don’t know how to do this without sounding a little preachy,” Bliss said. “The greatest threat facing humanity is not extinction. It’s being removed completely from the timeline. One cannot travel in space and not travel in time. The two are inseparable. The Fermi Paradox, it doesn’t account for time travel paradoxes removing sentient beings from the playing field. It also doesn’t account for the maturation point, a fixed event that all sentient beings must face- join the Galactic Civilization, in a reasonably peaceful manner, or be removed from the timeline.”

“What does that mean?” Garcia asked. “We either meet your standard or you kill us?”

“You meet a social standard, or your species will find itself in a sterile universe, alone,” Bliss said. “Pushing a whole solar system into another Universe, even a artificially created Universe, is child’s play for the Elders.”

“Who are the Elders?”

“Oh, I don’t even understand the Elders. You’ll find references to them in your books. We all have inexplicable connections, but we’re not privy to everything. We’re not all knowing,” Bliss said. “We do know some things. Your forays into time has caused you to cycle up against a hard event. You have died multiple times. You have returned to your designated set point and brought back sufficient information that Earth now has a fairly good idea of what they were facing. Consequently, because of your knowledge of that timeline, you have become too valuable a piece to remove you from the game completely.”

“I don’t remember anything important...”

“You remember what you need to, but the information is there, in your subconscious, and we have access to that. We have access to your passenger. We have access to all of you. All of your lives,” Bliss said, gesturing towards the books. “Every book a life.”

Bliss opened a book on the table. He resisted looking at it at first, thinking he didn't have time to read, but he had all the time in the world. In this Universe. He was drawn into it. It was strange. Each page contained frames, like it was a graphic novel. Each frame had an incoherent picture that became clearer as he looked at it, but obscured the moment his eyes jumped. The longer he focused on a frame, the clearer it became. It rose from the page and threatened to immerse him, like water rising around him. The threat of drowning in the image was tangible and he pulled free, the way a body might jerk to avoid sleep, or to avoid being hypnotized. The book contained holographic crystals imbedded in each page. Each page was integrally linked to each page, each frame was somehow tied to another, but not necessarily linearly; each book was integrally linked to another book. Each frame was a Planck unit of time, but also alternatives branches of what could have been realized had he gone left instead of right. Some of the alternatives had been realized. It was if his prior actions had mapped it out so that this ship and this crew could have access to the places that were once dark, maybe still dark.

“What is this?” Garcia asked.

“Your life story,” Bliss offered.

“This whole book?” Garcia asked.

“This whole library is about you,” Bliss said. “Not just you as Garcia, but all the other lives you have ever held. There are a lot of Garcia stories because you were a starship Captain, because you were a temporal agent, and because you were an active multiplicity, and because of the number of simulations your brain was immersed in.”

“You mean the recordings of my prenatal and early childhood lives in the simulator?” Garcia asked. “Or are you talking metaphysics?”

“Yes. And metaphysics,” Bliss said. “Metaphysics is really misnomers. It's not meta, it's just a more complete understanding of physics. There is super normal or paranormal. It's just all normal. We have access to all of your lives incarnate.”

“You mean...”

“Even the non-Garcia lives. We have learned to track souls and soul groups through space-time,” Bliss said. “We have access to High Tech which can communicate with higher dimensional realities- several of which exist outside the universe's frame of reference. We can read the membrane of the Universe the same way you can decode the information off the surface of a black hole. We can read a universe the way we read these books. Everything is recorded holographically. These books are about you, the lives you touched, and about your Soul group. For more on direct information on your Soul Group, we'd have to retire to another library.”

“Am I dreaming?” Garcia said.

“No,” Bliss said.

“Georgia?” Garcia asked. “Is she here?”

“No,” Bliss said.

“She died?” Garcia asked.

“No,” Bliss said. “We don't have access to her in this timeline. The Event changed the timeline. You were the key bridge maker,” Bliss said.

“I am lost,” Garcia said.

“But now your found,” Bliss said.

Garcia frowned. Had he made the joke, it would have been funny, but he was irritated.

“Contrary to popular belief, a change in the timeline doesn’t eradicate the previous timeline. It continues on, and a new timeline branches off. Temporal paradoxes happen all the time. Usually small ones that blend back into the origin timeline. Some timelines have enough staying power they become a thing until themselves. It usually is not a stark break. For a certain intervals, two timelines may run so closely parallel that there is bleed over between the two before the membranes of space time break and become distinct, separate entities. This interval of relative instability tends to be dependent on the Event’s contextual points. In your case, the Supernova was the event. There was temporal artifact that went back almost two hundred years. From the point of the event, the ‘change over’ was instantaneous. In real time, starting at beginning context point, the ‘change over’ took almost two hundred years to fully manifest. The closer one gets in time to the Event’s horizon, the faster the changes seem to manifest. You, Sir, as a temporal agent, lived through flux of a time change. You exist in two solid realities, and all the paths in between. You know things. Impossible things. You know things that relatively true, that might not be true for us. Going forwards, you become the Torch Bearer of those times before us. They are not lost, we just don’t have access to them.”

Garcia sat down. Bliss gave him a moment to digest that information. And then, she wanted to comfort him. She pointed back to the book. She tapped a frame she wanted him to look at. His eyes went there. He fell into it and was suddenly no longer in the library, but on the USS Georgia. The ship was fleeing a supernova. They were headed out at just the right speed to stay ahead of the wave front. The main viewer was reflecting the view behind them.

Georgia was in the command chair.

“I failed,” Garcia said.

Bliss took his hand. They were there, but no one saw them. They were like ghosts. It felt so real. Except, when Bliss took her hand, time stop.

“Everything is okay,” Bliss assured him. “You saved your ship. They went to light speed in time to avoid this.”

“But...”

“It feels real. In many ways, it is real. We’re here and we’re not here. They know we’re here, on a Soul level, a deeper level than even the normal frequency range the subconscious mind has access to, so we’re safe, we’re not going to disrupt this occurrence,” Bliss said. “If you want to think of it as a recording, you can. Sometimes that makes it easier.”

“How...”

“Oh, that’s a level of physics I can’t explain,” Bliss said. “If you want to speak with Tesla later, you can. Yay you if you can make heads or tails out of his tech babble.”

It didn’t occur to him to explore the introduction of Tesla. Anyone could be named Tesla. “Can you run this backwards?” Garcia asked.

“No,” Bliss said. “We’d have to step out and step back in. No matter where you drop the needle on the record, it always plays forwards of where you drop in. Time is always perceived in this manner. We can slow it. We can stop it. But if you want to go back, we have to go out and back in. Each graph holds a Planck time capture. You can go through the entire ‘world-line from

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