

# ENDURANCE



T. J. BLAKE

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*Endurance* is his first novel.

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# Part 1

## 1

A man sat slumped with his back against the wall, injured and staring at the last flickering light, at a vandalised station on the London Underground; the bricks and tiles scattered across the floor. The bloodstained walls have made it unrecognisable. No one else was around. He sat in the corner of the stop, deeply hidden within the shadows. The entrance was barricaded with collapsed concrete and bricks. Specks of dust floated down from the ceiling onto the ground and covered the man in a sheen of white. Complete silence was occasionally interrupted by loud screams from above, mostly from women and children. As the screaming stopped, murmuring and deep roars began. The sounds were not completely clear, but resembled a heavy smoker clearing his throat.

The man emptied his pockets; a wallet was all he had; it contained only a bank card and driving licence. Tom was thirty-years old, with roughed-up black hair and stubble on his face. He wore a suit that had seen better days. His shirt was covered in blood and there was a deep gash on his shoulder, with blood trickling slowly down and further staining it. As he stared at his driving licence, he inhaled and exhaled wearily, and mentally went over the events leading to his current circumstances...

*Today's been hard. How could a day go from being so good to so fucked up so fast? I don't even know what's going on anymore. How am I going to get help?*

Tom slowly rose. Dust fell from him, creating a smoky atmosphere. He choked. In pain, he clutched his injured leg, fell into the wall and slid onto the ground.

Blood dribbled from a wound on his leg; it had been oozing blood for some time now. Trying to shake off the pain, he slowly and carefully pushed himself upright.

Breathing heavily, he used all the strength in his legs and balanced first on his left foot and then his right, testing the strength to ensure the limbs would bear his weight. He began to limp toward the blocked exit. Tom moved some of the debris. After a few moments, he kicked the barricade in frustration as he realized it was completely blocked with monstrous pieces of concrete that would require heavy equipment to move.

He knew there was no choice but to walk through the tunnel to the next stop in search of a clear exit. The thought of this journey into the dark with no light at all to assist him sent a shiver down his spine, his palms began to sweat and the hairs on his neck stood on end. He stepped off the platform, onto the tracks, and stared weakly into the gaping black maw of the tunnel. Tom took a cautious step toward the darkness. He was shaken when he heard a scream echo through the blackness. It sounded like a grown man. He took one step; followed by another. Then yet another step, until he stumbled into something on his left side. He knelt cautiously, trying to protect his injured leg as much as possible. He leaned forward, squinting to make the best of the feeble light. Tom saw that he'd tripped over the corpse of young man, who seemed to be in his early twenties. He wore a green polo shirt and blue jeans, soaked in blood. The clothes clung tightly to his physique. His arm was covered in blood, with deep scratches all over it; the entire arm had a strange, lumpy, chewed look.

The bile climbed into Tom's throat; he vomited violently and fell onto his hands and knees.

Screams faded into the distance, but Tom attempted to block them from his mind. He stared at the filthy train tracks; the musky scent of the tracks and the smell of the rotting corpse overwhelmed his senses, making him nauseous. Tom continued to focus on the dust-filled tracks. He watched the clumps of dust rolling from his knees, past his hands toward the tunnel, blown by a breeze that entered the stop behind him.

He placed his palms on the grimy wall and pulled himself to his feet. He stepped away from the wall and stood upright, facing the tunnel. Clenching his shaking fists, he began to walk toward the tunnel. As he stumbled past the corpse, the shadows wrapped around him; dragging him in. He disappeared into the darkness...

## 2

It was sunny in London at Jubilee Gardens; the sun glistened off the river Thames and the surrounding buildings. The London Eye gleamed from the rays. The grass was green with no dead, yellow, dried grass in sight. The Thames was dark blue with boats cruising along the river and seagulls fluttering around the water.

Tom Williams and his long-term girlfriend, Anna Reid, sat on the green grass having a picnic. Her straight, smooth, shoulder length hair shone in the sun as she tossed her head to look at Tom. Her dark brown eyes sparkled with hidden mirth as she gazed at him. He reached down to stroke her soft, pale skin and touched her peachy lips lightly with his; she blessed him with an elegant smile. She wore a knee length red dress, brown boots and brown-tinted sunglasses.

'Can we see that new romantic film tomorrow in the cinema to mark our five-year anniversary?'

'Yes, I suppose we can, now I'm unemployed I'm free non-stop,' Tom sighed.

'Oh, Tom, don't worry, we'll find you something soon, I guarantee it.'

'I don't know. There are no jobs around here,' Tom chuckled, "I'm a bit nervous about ever finding anything.'

'I know, Tom, but it will get better and you'll find something and when you do, everything will be great.' Anna held Tom's hand. 'Come on, let's eat, I'm starving,' Anna said.

After eating their fill of the lunch of fried chicken, pasta salad, and tiny pastries for dessert, Tom and Anna lay down, gazing into the clear blue sky. The sun dominated the sky and shone brightly on them and everything around them. A light breeze floated through the gardens. The trees danced and the grass swayed from side to side.

Tom turned onto his stomach and ran his hand through Anna's soft glossy hair, 'What do you want to do now?'

Anna rolled onto her stomach and looked at Tom, 'I don't know.' She stroked Tom's wiry black hair and moved down his bristly face, over his cheeks, to his chin and back the way she came.

'I've got to go back to work soon, I only have five minutes of the lunch hour left, so we should probably make our way back.' Anna stood, brushed the grass off her dress and grabbed her

bag. She pulled out her mobile, checked the time, and then threw it back into her bag. 'Come on you.'

Tom stood and brushed the grass off his jeans and his navy blue and white checked shirt.

They left Jubilee Park and walked along the side of the River Thames, holding hands, talking, and joking around, until they arrived at the front of the fruit and vegetable shop where Anna worked.

Outside serving the customers, was a middle-aged, slightly overweight man. He saw Tom and nodded; Tom returned the nod and looked at Anna.

'See you later, baby. I'll meet you here; then walk you home, if you like?'

'That'd be nice, Tom. Thanks.' Anna smiled and wrapped her arms around Tom's neck. As she did, Tom got a waft of her sweet perfume. 'See ya, Tom, I love you.'

'Bye, I love you, too.'

Anna stared at Tom and smiled. When she smiled, her slightly freckled nose crinkled. She kissed his lips, loosened her grip, and released him.

She skipped to the shop, turned at the entrance, waved, blew Tom a kiss then walked inside.

### **3**

Tom arrived at the home he shared with three roommates. He walked through the front door and corridor. The corridor and sitting room floor were covered with a soft, bouncy, green carpet. The walls downstairs and upstairs on the landing were a soft cream colour.

With every step, the floor boards under the carpet gave a loud screech.

'Anyone home? Tom shouted. He heard a muffled voice from the sitting room. Tom entered to find one of his house mates, Stewart, lying on the sofa with his legs crossed together on its arm, watching the Jeremy Kyle Show.

'You alright Tom, any luck with a job yet?'

'Nothing yet, still on the lookout. Something should come up soon. Got anything planned today?' Tom began to smile; 'Apart from watching The Jeremy Kyle show of course.' Tom sat on an armchair to the right side of the sofa.

'Nah, mate nothing today, just chilling and that, you?'

'Well, seeing Anna again later. Tomorrow is our five-year anniversary of being together so I'm taking her to a posh place to eat and then to the cinema. I think I might propose to her.' Tom grinned.

'Whoa, wait a second.' Stewart paused. 'You're proposing? For that you need a ring, pal, and some money while you're at it.'

'I've got a ring. I do have some money, you know, I had a good ICT job being a designer. It paid well; but obviously I need a job to keep my money topped up before I lose it all.'

‘That’s a big step, mate, but I wish you the best.’ Stewart rose from his cocoon, pulled Tom out of his chair and shook his hand firmly. ‘Your dad would be proud.’

Tom felt himself welling up and quickly moved toward the door. ‘Cheers, going to go in the attic right quick just to look at the bit of Dad’s stuff that I kept. Where are Dan and Lucy?’

‘They’re both at work, and won’t be back till later.’

‘Alright. See you in a bit.’

Tom walked out of the sitting room and up the creaky stairs. He got to the top and looked up at the entrance to the attic. He carried a stepladder from a walk-in cupboard and set the ladder underneath the entrance. He climbed the ladder and pushed the attic hatch open and pulled himself into the darkness. Once inside, Tom switched on the light, attached to part of the wooden scaffolding. Specks of dust and a musty smell welcomed him.

He stepped across the wooden structures to the other side of the room to an open box, where all of his father possessions were placed. Using his palm to wipe the dust off the photos, Tom looked longingly at the pictures of his dead family. Of the three people in the photo – him, his mum, and his dad, he was the only one still living. He set the photos aside and looked at the cassette recorder his father loved and once used to play his music. The player impressed Tom as a child because it also had the capability to communicate with others through a radio frequency.

Next, Tom picked up an article about his father’s death. The headline read “Murder Mystery.” No one knew why Tom’s father, Ken Williams, was killed or who murdered him.

Ken Williams was a physicist working with a very specialized and top secret experiment for his company; this made him unique in his job. He was shot to death in his own lab. There were no CCTV cameras working at the time. There was no known reason for him to be killed. There had been no new developments in his murder case. Tom put the paper back in the box. Thinking about his father’s death made him depressed and reflective.

Tom’s mother died of cancer when he was very young. Tom never really knew his mother, Sarah.

Ken and Sarah had gone away on holiday to Rome, knowing that she didn’t have long to live. Ken returned home a week after they’d left and broke the news to family and friends that she had passed away while in Italy.

The people closest to Tom were his girlfriend Anna, and his housemates Stewart, Dan and Lucy. These folks were as close to family as he had. Some days the loneliness hit him like a brick in the head. It was painful in its all-encompassing blackness. Tom left the attic in a much darker mood than when he’d entered it.

Anna finished work at 6:30 p.m.; Tom was waiting outside to meet her. She ran to him, jumped into his arms, wrapped herself around him, and caused him to stumble in her happiness to see him. She laughed happily as he leaned down to kiss her deeply. ‘Hello Tommy, did you miss me?’ Anna laughed aloud as she waited for the answer.

‘Of course I did,’ Tom kissed her again, and set her down.

They reached Anna's flat, located in a green area. The building itself looked grubby, but the street was clean with few neighbours. To the building's left was a small grassy area that was fenced off to protect the flowers and trees.

They walked to the front entrance and stood under the porch. They hugged each other and Tom kissed her.

'What are you up to tonight, then, missy?'

'Well, Mel and Lucy are coming round to gossip and eat chocolate.'

'Cool, well you better get inside and get ready. See you tomorrow.' Tom smiled and kissed Anna. 'Bye, I love you.'

Anna smiled, 'I love you, too.'

Tom watched Anna walk inside and then watched her through the window as she walked upstairs.

Anna walked into her flat and threw her keys on the kitchen table. She dragged her feet as she stumbled to her sofa, tired after a long day at work.

Tom returned home to see Stewart, who lay sprawled out on the sofa, asleep, with the TV still on. Tom laughed as he walked upstairs to prepare for his date with Anna.

Tom lay on his bed and wondered what Anna's answer would be.

#### 4

The next day was Tom and Anna's five-year anniversary. Tom arrived for his date with Anna early and was sent to wait for her in the sitting room. He had dressed carefully for this night in a black blazer, white shirt, black tie and shoes. He even took the time to gel his hair; it was all spiked up unevenly.

Wandering toward Anna's window, Tom reached into his blazer pocket and pulled out a small maroon box. He opened the box to look at the engagement ring as it glinted from the street lamp outside. Tom moved the ring from side to side, using his thumb and index finger. The diamond shone brightly and changed colour. He imagined himself kneeling down in front of Anna and placing it on her finger.

His thoughts were interrupted when he heard a door creak. Tom quickly snapped the box closed and slipped it back into his pocket; he turned to see Anna emerging from her room. She sauntered across her living room wearing a long purple silk dress with matching purple high-heeled shoes. Her hair was in a sexy French twist with a couple of strands left artfully dangling in front. Tom's chest constricted painfully at her beauty.

'What do you think?'

Tom stared at Anna, smiling. For a moment, he was completely unable to speak. At last, when he'd gathered his wits about him again, he uttered, 'You look fantastic.'

Anna smiled; her cheeks turning slightly red. She picked up her bag to leave. Tom charged to the front door and opened it for her.



They arrived at Leicester Square and Anna asked 'So where are we going tonight? What's the plan?'

'Well, I booked us a table at The Savoy, and after, we'll go to the cinema to watch that film you wanted to see.'

'Wow. You know how to make a lady feel special on her anniversary, don't you? And I plan to show my appreciation by eating what's on my plate, for once, because I'm starving.'

As they walked side by side, Tom placed his hands in his trouser pockets; Anna put her left arm through the gap created between Tom's rib cage and his arm. She snuggled next to him as they walked along the sidewalk toward the restaurant.

They arrived at the Savoy; Tom held the door for Anna. She walked into the restaurant, followed by Tom. People's heads turned to stare at her; the men eyed her up and down, as did the women.

They were escorted to their table, romantically set with crystal and roses in a side vase. There were candles surrounding it and a note to Anna that read:

"To Anna. I love you so much and the last five years have been amazing. I would love to be with you for the rest of my life. Hope you enjoy tonight. Love Tom

Anna smiled while reading the note and blushed slightly. 'I can't believe this Tom. It's amazing, thank you so much.'

'You are so very welcome, darling. Hopefully, it'll be a great night for the both of us.'

'I'm sure it will.' She leaned across the small table and kissed him on the cheek.

They ordered their meal and drank champagne while they waited.

'So, how's this for you, Princess?'

'Oh, Tom, It's amazing, thank you so much. I really love you.'

'I love you too.' Tom took a sip of his champagne, holding the taste in his mouth, the bubbles began to swell; he swallowed. He felt the slightly acidic taste slide languidly down his throat.

Tom thought of the ring and unbuttoned the top button of his shirt. 'It's quite hot in here, isn't it, darling?' Tom said.

'Oh, is it? I haven't really noticed. Get that drink down you, you might feel better then.' Anna giggled as she took another sip from her glass. Tom picked up his champagne glass and finished it in one big gulp. As he swallowed, his throat felt fully stretched as the liquid travelled down. Reaching across the table and gripping the bottle of champagne, he began pouring another glass for himself. He looked to Anna, 'Want a top up?'

Anna shyly looked at him, then the bottle, 'No, thank you.'

They finished their appetizers, and were served their main courses. Tom quickly gulped it down. He felt clammy; his palms were soaked, and he began to fidget in his chair. As Anna struggled to finish her main course, Tom decided that he needed to go to the restroom.

'Darling, I'll be back in a second.'

Anna looked up at Tom with her mouth filled with lamb and potato and nodded. Tom turned and walked towards the restrooms.

He stumbled into a cubicle, pulled the toilet lid down and sat down. He pulled out the box and began to question his decision.

*Should I propose now or later? Should I have proposed earlier? Should I propose at all? After all, she might say no.*

Beginning to panic, Tom worked himself into even more of a sweat. His chest tightened and he struggled to breathe. He unbuttoned another button on his shirt, trying to get some air. He put the ring box back into his blazer pocket.

Tom flushed the toilet and tried to escape the cubicle with his shaking hands. He tried to steady himself and open the door.

Walking toward the sink, he buttoned his shirt. As he breathed slowly, trying to catch his breath, he splashed water on his face and watched the water trickle down his reflection in the mirror. He continued to watch the water moving down his face in uneven lines. His thoughts were interrupted as someone burst into the bathroom. The door smashed against the wall; Tom snapped violently out of his reverie. He walked to the hand drier, dabbed his face with a tissue, and left the bathroom to return to the table.

He decided to wait for a better moment to propose. They left the restaurant at 10 p.m. and made their way to the cinema. They got their tickets and went in to watch the film. Anna rested her head on Tom's shoulder while they watched the film and they held hands throughout.

Two hours later, the film ended and they began walking home. The streets were surprisingly empty.

*Is this time to propose?* Tom wondered.

Tom started shaking and felt butterflies in his stomach. A bead of sweat trickled down his back as he reached into his left pocket. He held the box within his pocket for a moment; then released it. He breathed easily until the next corner, another corner closer to Anna's flat.

*I can't wait too long to do this. Otherwise, I won't be able to do it tonight and I may not get another perfect time.*

He reached into his pocket again and grabbed the finely crafted maroon box. Stroking the box with his thumb and index finger, he brought it out of his pocket and introduced it into the night. He stepped in front of Anna.

'Anna, He knelt as he said her name in the middle of the quiet road.

Her eyes began to fill with tears, they glistened in the darkness; the street lamp's light outlined her fine physique and purple dress.

'Will you, Miss Anna...' Tom was interrupted when suddenly, the street lamps flickered. He reached out and gripped Anna's hand while still on his knees. The street lamps continued to flicker until they all went dark. The sound of tyres gripped firmly to the road approached their

position. By each second, the sound became clearer and louder. An enormous "THUMP" broke the air around Tom and wind washed brutally across his face as Anna's hand was snatched away from him. A padded sound followed, as if a sack of potatoes was dropped from a great height.

A car passed, so a brief light was generated. Tom stood in dread, calling for Anna. He lifted his hands and felt around in the darkness until there was enough light from the passing car to find Anna. Squinting, he focused on a purple blur lying on the ground.

Tom rushed over and, to his terror, discovered it was Anna. She was facing the ground but her body looked strange, her beauty seemed somehow twisted, deformed. Her hips were facing to her left, while her head faced the ground and her arms and legs seem were completely shattered, with fragments of bone peeking through her once lovely skin.

He clutched her to his chest. As he lifted her head to his face, he saw that her eyes were open.

'Oh my god Anna, talk to me.'

As her mouth opened, blood poured down her chin. Tom searched for a pulse but couldn't find one. He stared at her lifeless body in disbelief as he held her in his arms, crying.

He looked into her dead eyes, noticing they were now devoid of their usually vibrant colour. He stroked her soft cheeks and her dry lips with his finger tips. Some of the street lamps flickered back on, but the buildings remained dark as Tom sobbed and clutched Anna tightly in his arms. Residents came out of their homes to bear witness to the dramatic events outside.

A middle-aged man walked quietly towards Tom; he began to drag him away from Anna's body. There was a struggle as Tom tried to outmuscle the man and return to Anna's body. Screaming, Tom collapsed on the pavement and slumped onto his stomach.

Disoriented and bewildered, he stared at Anna and flashbaked over their five years together. The trauma painfully sunk in as he remembered her smile, her laugh, her physique, her walk, and her beautiful eyes.

Tom tried his best to come to his senses when he heard a loud explosion; it was so severe it shook the very ground he was lying upon. Tom sat up and stared ahead trying to figure out what was happening. Something hit his back and pummeled his head, hard, and he lost consciousness.

## **5**

Tom awoke to silence, staring at the concrete. The smell of smoke lingered and a cooling breeze stroked his skin.

Momentarily, he forgot about all that had happened; then his memory began to return in small increments.

First, he felt panic about the proposal, he remembered going to the restaurant, then to the cinema, and finally, he remembered his proposal... He remembered holding Anna's miss-constructed body in his arms and looking into her sightless eyes. As he attempted to stand, he couldn't, something was holding him down. He raised his head to dislodge the rubble that had

fallen upon him. He got to his knees but was completely disoriented; Anna's body had disappeared and there was no one in sight. Bricks, concrete and rubble covered the street around him.

Frightened, he ran, but tripped. As he landed, he felt a sharp, piercing pain in his leg. He looked down and saw a metal rod poking through his lower thigh. The rod was covered in blood and parts of his skin clung to the metal. Tom screamed in pain. Shaking with adrenalin, he reached slowly toward the rod with his left hand; he gripped it, trembling, he began to tug. The pain was too severe. He tried to snap the rod to make it shorter in his leg, but it was too thick. He gave up, and left the metal sticking in his leg, yet another disaster in a day filled with disasters.

Buildings that once stood proud have been obliterated. Most were family homes - young couples with small children. Some buildings were missing the roofs or half the house was now simply nonexistent.

Smoke and flames smothered the street. Tom walked along, staring wide-eyed at the damage. The flames were scorching, as he walked through it felt as if his face was being cooked. He limped to the spot he thought Anna had been hit, then to where he thought she had landed. He knelt, using his bloody hands to dig through the rubble trying to find her body. He had no luck, and his hands were getting carved up by the debris. He lay down and closed his eyes. The desperation to find Anna surpassed the pain of his injuries.

The uncomfortable surface dug into his back, but Tom couldn't think of anything except Anna, her beautiful features, her soft glossy hair and her sweet laugh.

An image of her dead body came into his mind. The thought wouldn't leave. She stared at him, her eyes full of anger and hurt. Her blood-shot eyes had less brown and more red in them. Her body was tangled and twisted. Suddenly, her body began to straighten with loud cracking sounds. Her bones unknotted, the cracking of the bones continued to echo in Tom's ears. Tom forced himself to wake from this nightmare.

'I must have fallen asleep.' Tom said.

*I've got to try to find out what's happened and what caused this. I've got to find her body, I just need to know. I need to find Stewart, Lucy and Dan, see if they're okay.*

Each street looked identical; the buildings obliterated; no sign of life at all, flames suffocated each street.

Tom arrived at Anna's flat; or at least where her flat once was. Her flat was gone. The greenery was just mud, smoke and a partially burnt tree stump.

The smoke hovered above the ground all the way through London. Tom made his way to what used to be Jubilee Gardens, and was now full of debris, with parts of what used to be the London eye covering the area. The tree trunks were burnt with no greenery in sight. He stared across the Thames; there was nothing but empty land.

Tom limped to the main road and saw some cars burnt to dust and others flipped upside down. The walk bridge that led to Waterloo station was collapsed in the middle of the road, crushing cars, and probably people as well.

Tom's hope for survival was crushed.

*How am I ever going to do this by myself? There's no one around; there's no such thing as the police anymore, probably not even the army. What am I going to do?*

Something wriggled under the collapsed footbridge, snagging Tom's. Momentarily forgetting the pain in his leg, Tom ran toward it. Someone was trapped under the bridge. Her bloodstained hair covered her face.

Tom jumped and skidded along the tarmac and knelt next to the young girl; she couldn't have been much older than twelve.

'Hello? Speak to me. Are you okay?'

The girl moved her mouth, but no words came out. She exhaled slowly. There was a long pause, as Tom waited and waited for her chest to rise again.

'No, no, stay with me please. What's your name?'

The girl didn't react. Tom tried to turn her over, but she was wedged under the bridge. He grabbed her arms and yanked. As he pulled, he something tear; she'd lost her legs. He pulled her torso away from the rubble. He released his grip, jumped back in horror and fell onto the tarmac. His brain seemed to have switched off as he stared at this lifeless and legless young girl.

Full of fear, Tom stared at the torso for what seemed like a lifetime. As he tried to stand, he couldn't seem to get off his back. He eventually climbed off the ground and limped away, looking back at the girl over his shoulder.

Tom staggered into the middle of the road, looked up into the sky, and tried to block everything out around him. He began to scream, digging his fingernails into his hand, drawing blood. His screams echoed through the shattered streets, bouncing off each corner, brick, and car, and returned to him like a boomerang. The screams stopped and the silence returned.

*What could have done this?*

Tom limped through the streets of London. Alone.

*Why has this happened? What is it, a world war? An alien invasion?*

Tom's thoughts were interrupted by screams. Standing still, he tried to identify from which direction the screams were coming. The screams sounded as if they were to his left, just around what used to be a corner, where a partially constructed building was. Tom began to jog, but slowed due to the pain in his leg.

*I've got to ignore this pain; I'll find somewhere to hide out to treat it.*

Continuing to jog, with a slight limp, he got closer and closer to the screams. The screams turned from an echo to a solid sound. Soon, Tom saw the screaming woman. She was crawling with one arm and no legs; her face was covered in blood and looked as if it'd been scraped along the concrete-strewn ground. Her screams rang through Tom's ears. The sight made him queasy. He ran toward her.

'Shit. What happened here? Do you know anything? Did you see anything?' Tom sounded desperate.

'I saw everything, please can you just...' Her weak voice was overpowered by Tom's shouts.

'Tell me what you saw.' Tom said fearfully.

'I saw lights in the sky...' the woman's voice petered in and out as she struggled to speak, losing her breath. '...then something came from out of the sky and started shooting everything and everyone... put me out of this pain, please?'

Tom stood and looked down at the woman.

'What do you mean?'

'Kill me.' She whispered.

*She has no chance of surviving. I don't feel capable of killing this innocent woman. She is in pain but how do I do it? Only thing I've ever killed is an irritating fly entering my house.*

Tom aggressively pulled the metal rod out his of leg, his skin and pieces of flesh stuck to it. He held the rod above the woman's head. As he aimed it into the centre of her forehead, he threw it aside forcefully.

'I can't do it.' Tom sobbed, 'I'm sorry.'

'No, please. Please I'm begging you.'

Tom stared at her torso, arm and then her face.

*I feel worse letting her suffer like this.*

Tom found the rod, knelt beside her head and he stabbed her in the throat. Blood spurted onto Tom's face; he ignored it and continued to violently stab the woman until there was no movement. He stared at her body and felt ashamed to have killed this innocent person. He stood over her, staring down at the ground around her, not daring to look into her eyes. They were still open. He looked toward the empty skies in disbelief.

*I'm now a killer; I've probably killed a mother, a daughter and a wife.*

He tried to erase this act of senseless violence from his memory but could not. This wasn't the time or the situation to have good morals.

*This is about life and death now.*

*This all seems so unreal. It's like a nightmare that you just can't awaken from. The way the woman was describing it made it sound like an alien attack. It could be possible; no one has ever said aliens don't exist and there have been some sightings of such things.*

Ken Williams, Tom's dad, never believed in aliens but he never completely disbelieved either. 'You can't ever be sure of something that you can't prove to be unreal,' he used to tell Tom. 'Approach life with an open mind,' he also said. Today, Tom was approaching life with an open mind; he had killed a woman, held two dead bodies, and was considering this to be an alien attack.

Tom sat down behind a car. He took off his tie and tied it around his leg over the wound; he pulled it tightly to stop the bleeding.

Tom moved away from the car to turn around and pull himself up using the side mirror. As he stood looking over the roof of the car, a light shined on him, immediately followed by shots that hit the car and the tarmac behind him. Flinching away from the shots, there was an explosion behind him. Tom and the car were launched into the air, flipped and tossed onto the ground. Tom jumped up immediately, not even stopping to assess his injuries, and ran away at full speed. Whatever it was followed him and continued to shoot, hitting the tarmac behind his feet. Occasionally, the bullets hit over his head, piercing buildings and shattering the tarmac ahead of him.

He attempted to see what it was by looking over his right shoulder; a glaring white light shone into the corner of his eye. He ran into a building and up the stairs. The bullets pierced the walls and travelled all the way through the building to the other wall and pierced it as well. Tom dove to the ground, skidding across the wooden floor, picking up numerous splinters in his hands and knees. He gasped in pain. A bullet skimmed his shoulder, knocking him facedown into the floor. His shaking hand cupped his shoulder, as he pulled his hand away; he saw that his hand was covered in blood. His shoulder had a massive bloody gouge in it.

Tom stayed on the ground, quivering from exhaustion. The bullets stopped, as did the jet-like sound. He groaned as he tried to stand, his wounds felt more painful with every movement.

Holding his breath, Tom silently got to his feet. He tried to sneak through the room on tiptoes, undetected. Every step he took was silent, until a floor board creaked. He paused and looked around. He peered through the shattered window. The light was not in sight. He jumped over furniture and rubble, trying to silence his progress by landing on his toes.

He found a staircase leading straight into darkness.

*Should I go down there? There might be an exit, but there might also be whatever is driving that hovercraft down there waiting for me.*

Tom's thoughts were interrupted as he was suddenly forced off his feet by an explosion behind him that propelled him down the stairs. After a few seconds, he landed sprawled on the filthy ground.

The world paused. Tom listened to the machine outside, circling the building. It sounded like a hovercraft with an engine noise like a train coming to a stop.

Tom looked around the room from his vantage point on the floor, searching for a window to try to identify what was shooting at him. There was no window in sight. He wondered if the shooting machine had left him. Listening carefully, Tom limped up the stairs. The room he had fled across only moments ago was blown away in the explosion. He looked all around for the hovercraft, but it was gone for the moment. As he turned to go back down the stairs, there was another explosion.

The building began to shake. Tom searched for an exit; but couldn't see one in the dreary light. Finally, he spotted an opening about seven yards away. He darted toward it, the door seemed to be moving away until he dove into the exit, reaching out to it, hoping, just hoping, to fly out of the building.

He landed on his stomach on the dirty ground. He hopped up, hastily, using his good arm and leg, and continued to run. Looking over his shoulder, he saw the building he was just in begin to collapse. As it hit the ground, dust and rubble smothered the air.

Tom looked back to see the light in the air circling the rubble. Tom landed in a hiding spot where the ground raised into something of a hillock; just enough for him to lie behind it. He watched the light disappear into thin air.

He warily stood, only to then see the building he had been in completely blown to smithereens.

*Why are they after me? What have I done to deserve this? What did Anna do to deserve to be killed? When I find out who's responsible, I will make them suffer.*

Tom felt aggression build. Tears gathered beneath his eyelids, a hard blink forced the tears to slide down his cheeks. His fists clenched. He remembered having to kill one woman out of mercy and another woman – a mere child – had died in his hands as her body was ripped apart by the violence that had occurred all around them. He didn't fear the thought of death or killing.

Tom decided it was time to find shelter and a hideout, time to plan what to do next and to try mend his wounds.

## **6**

Tom walked around London for hours.

There was no method of proper communication, thus he couldn't determine if the problem occurred only in England or if it was worldwide. All Tom could do was continue to move and search for a safe hideout. He couldn't go home because there wasn't a home for him to return to. His home and his father's belongings were ash. Stewart, Lucy, Dan, and most of the human population were all most likely dead.

Tom sat down to rest and think for a moment. He felt weak and his body felt heavy. Emotionally, he was numb; and the mental pain and exhaustion had taken their toll. Anna's body haunted him – showing itself to him repeatedly in his mind. Her bloodshot eyes stared at him; her bloody neck and face marred her beauty, her body curved and bent in ways unimaginable. The cracking of her bones in his nightmare rang through his head nonstop while her threatening red eyes stared him down and made him fearful and uncomfortable. He tried to erase these thoughts of Anna, but he couldn't remember any other memories of her; instead, her dead body haunted him, over and over again.

*I should have proposed earlier; then she wouldn't have been hit by that car! Or maybe I shouldn't have proposed at all; then we would have been home earlier and avoided the catastrophe.*

The day darkened; the temperature dropped; the clouds filled with anguish and anger. London was a ghost town and a victim of mass destruction. The streets were unrecognizable. Tom searched for two days for any sign of hope.



His smart clothes were ruined, his white shirt was grey and filthy, his trousers and blazer covered in dust, and his tie, still tied around his leg, was soaked with blood. His hair was no longer spiked, but instead was a rubble-loaded mess stuck to his scalp. His slightly tanned skin had a grey tint and was covered in cuts and bruises.

He continued to move to yet another part of London not as destroyed as much as other parts.

Tom had not eaten since he was with Anna in the restaurant, he felt feeble; his throat was tight, he had a cough that made his throat sore and he was having difficulty breathing.

He continued to walk until he tripped on some debris and fell. He rolled onto his back and stared at the grey and oppressive sky.

He imagined what London must look like from above. He could see it: It looked dark and dreary, enclosed by smoke and decorated with patches of flames and debris. He then imagined what England must look like coming from the sea. Looking black and burnt away, with no life whatsoever and with nature burnt to a crisp, it must look like so much ash. He then imagined the world. A circular ball that looked volcanic and ready to erupt, the waters grey and full of floating ash and wreckage. Tom thought to himself...

*This is the view of the aliens that are attacking.*

As Tom sat up and looked around him, he paused as he noticed a corner shop with a mass of bricks in front of it. He was astonished to see the building appeared in good condition compared to other buildings.

Without hesitation, Tom rushed toward the building; he was suddenly full of energy and such elation that he forgot about his pain, concentrated instead on getting refreshments. As he ran, he began to seriously hope there was still some food and drink inside. Stopping outside, in front of the piled concrete pieces and mounds of bricks, Tom began to climb. Finally reaching the top, he slid into the shop.

The shop was dark but still had plenty of food and a lot of drink. The only source of light was coming from the refrigerators around the back of the shop. That area was full of microwave food, quick snacks and drinks. The floor was covered in blood and bits of concrete, but otherwise, everything looked normal.

'I could do this place up. Get some power in here, some lighting and start my own business. I would make so much money with so many people and so many aliens coming in to buy refreshments,' Tom paused.

*I never used to talk to myself out loud, I am definitely mad.*

He walked to the fridge and grabbed a bottle of water. Using all his strength to take off the cap, he poured water all over his face, leaving his mouth open to catch whatever water he could. He grabbed another water bottle and drank it down within eight seconds, followed by a Lucozade. He began to drink it while he casually walked around the shop looking for food. He found sandwiches, sausage rolls, pork pies, chocolate, biscuits, fruit and cold baked beans. He didn't hesitate to eat the food. Once finished, he felt rejuvenated and bloated.

There was a rucksack on the counter. Tom picked it up and emptied it by holding it upside down, shaking it around, until the objects inside fell out. Not taking any notice of what fell out,

he filled the rucksack with food and drink. He packed snacks and filled his bag with Lucozade and water. Once full, he set it behind the counter for when he left, but for now, he decided would rest here for a night.

Tom gathered plasters, needles, cotton buds and vodka. With no good quality lighting, Tom walked out the back of the shop and found two torches, one battery powered and the other a windup. He also found some fishing wire. He sat on the ground with everything around him, his back against the counter and his legs stretched out in front of him. He loosened the tie from around his leg and looked at the injury on his thigh. It was a bloody hole with purple and white pus surrounding it. He poured straight vodka onto the wound and screamed in agony as the alcohol sterilized the wound. The pain was too intense. He punched and head butted the ground repeatedly, while holding his leg so tightly he cut off the circulation. He regained his concentration and turned on one torch and laid it on the floor facing him and put the other in his mouth.

He picked up a needle and dipped it into the vodka for a moment. He then threaded the fishing line through it, tied it onto the needle and stabbed it into his leg, he guided the needle through the skin, over the wound and through the other side of his skin and continued to stitch the wound closed.

'Not bad, Tommo, not bad,' he mumbled to himself.

His leg felt oddly numb. He then opened his shirt and looked at the bullet scrape on his shoulder. He poured vodka on it and squealed in pain. He couldn't stitch it since it was in a bad place and it was a gash, so couldn't be closed anyway. Instead, he put plasters over it and taped the cluster of plasters on.

After being a surgeon, Tom decided to drink the vodka to help him sleep. He drank steadily for about two hours and finally fell asleep.

## 7

Tom awakened in a rush, short of breath and in a sweat. After having slept on his back, he bolted upright and began to cough. He continued to cough for a few minutes; blood spewed from his mouth with each painful bout of coughing. Choking on the blood; he crawled on all fours to the refrigerator containing the drinks. Pulling himself up, he reached for a water bottle that seemed a thousand miles away from his grasp. He finally grabbed a water bottle. He composed himself and began to sip the water, which stopped the choking, allowing him to catch his breath.

Shaken, he looked at his arms. His veins were enflamed and his body felt numb. Tom pinched his skin and couldn't feel the pain. He continued to pinch himself, but he couldn't feel the pinches at all. . He sniffed the air and couldn't smell the grime, smoke or dust. He seemed to be losing all his senses.

He stood and stretched. As he stretched his arms and legs, he wandered to the counter and picked up the rucksack and put it on his back. He decided he needed to move on from the shop, but might return to get more refreshments later.

He looked around and headed to his left to see what he could find.

As he walked, gun shots blasted in the distance. He paused and listened hard to work out which direction they were coming from. The gunshots were in front of him so he ran toward the sound.

Tom sprinted through the streets. The gunshots became clearer the more he ran. The echoes began to disappear; he decided he must be getting close. As he turned a corner, he saw a man and two women, perhaps a man with his wife and daughter. The parents appeared to be in their fifties and the daughter looked around twenty-five.

They were shooting into the sky. They paused as Tom appeared, when suddenly an explosion hit them and they vanished into thin air.

Astounded, Tom halted in his footsteps and looked up into the sky. There was the bright white light on him again. He saw the side of the machine; it was dark and metallic-looking. Tom didn't have time to identify whether it was an alien attack. He turned to run when suddenly he was blown away, literally tossed ten feet into the air, landing awkwardly on his hand. He heard something crunch and looked down to see his hand hanging at an impossible angle, with a lump poking out of his skin next to his wrist. He got up, but his rucksack had disappeared. He spotted two water bottles on the ground, unharmed. He rushed toward the bottles, grabbing them quickly before running away from the hovercraft; running in zigs and zags to make it difficult to target him. He turned a corner just as an explosion hit a building. Bricks flew past him and debris hit his back. He stumbled, but regained his balance and continued to run.

He saw an entrance to the London Underground. There was no sign to identify which stop it was. He galloped toward it and ran down the steps into the underground. Just as he reached it, he heard explosions from above and felt vibrations under his feet. He got into the empty underground stop and the entrance collapsed behind him. Dust and smoke billowed into the stop, making it difficult for him to breathe. It affected his sight as flecks of dust drifted into his eyes.

He was greeted by silence. Clueless about what to do next, he sat in the corner of the stop and stared at the exit.

He heard screams, which was strange, since he hadn't seen many people anywhere. Each scream was muted by an explosion. There was nothing Tom could do. He felt shattered; it seemed as if he hadn't eaten for days even though he had. He pulled out one of the two water bottles he had in his pockets. He took a few sips from it and put it on the floor next to him. He pulled the other bottle from his pocket and put it next to the first bottle.

He lay down on his side.

Tom remembered the feeling of being close to normal human contact for the first time in days. It depressed him. He thought about Anna's dead body. She looked better than he previously remembered. Her eyes were closed; no blood was on her body. He stared at her curves and her glossy hair. Suddenly, her red, blood-filled eyes opened wide and stared straight at Tom. She stared at him with vengeance as her skin turned dark and mouldy. Her neck snapped out of place and blood spooled out of her mouth. Her veins began to enflame and burst, the blood under her skin burst from her body. Tom purged the thoughts out of his mind. He couldn't understand why Anna was haunting him but he struggled to control it. He couldn't think of any positive thoughts, they were all negative and recurring.

He felt weak and vulnerable.

*Whatever is after me could easily get down here through the tunnel or just move the rubble out of the way with an explosion. I need to make contact somehow with the world, I need to know how bad this really is and who's affected. Wait a second, Dad's cassette player. You can pick up radio frequencies on it. If there are other survivors, they may be on a frequency waiting for others to respond; and if it's not worldwide, I can get help!*

Tom gained energy and confidence, he needed to get to his house and get into the attic, if either still existed.

Tom tried to get off the ground but felt a deep, aching pain in his leg; the stitching had come loose and was causing friction on his skin. He began to pull the fishing line, trying to get the stitches out. The wound became deeper as his skin hung on the line. He eventually pulled all the line out. He looked at his shoulder wound. The cluster of plasters had fallen off at some point. Tom was back where he began. He felt vulnerable, dehydrated, famished and very, very alone.

He sat with his back against the wall. He attempted to pop his wrist back into place. He held his hand and tried to figure out how to set the bone. The pain was unbearable. He got a firm grip and bent it in the opposite direction. He tried to block out the pain but it was simply too much. Holding it, he forced his wrist to one side and it finally reattached to the joint. The pain slowly decreased. He let go and his hand flopped to the floor.

He stared at the last flickering light. Each time it flickered, he saw Anna's face staring at him with those blood-red eyes full of vengeance.

Tom stayed at the underground stop he believed to be Embankment for at least two days. He had no more water.

The stop was a wreck; it was violated and destroyed, making it unrecognizable. He listened to the ground above and continued to hear explosions and screams. Of more concern, he heard deep roars that sounded like tigers hunting their prey.

He decided to get up; dust fell off him and floated to the ground and into the air. Choking from the dust, he tensed each time he coughed, the coughs were sending spasms to his leg, causing it to tense and hurt. He clutched the tender leg, leaned into the wall, and slid to the ground.

Blood ran down his leg, the cut now healing properly. Trying to shake off the pain and the lethargy of dehydration, he positioned himself into a press up, but he was much too weak to do any exercises. He got to his knees and stared straight ahead.

Breathing heavily, he used all the strength in his legs to balance on his left foot and then his right, trying to determine if his legs were going to hold his weight. He began to limp toward the blocked exit. He attempted to move some of the debris, but it was thoroughly blocked. In frustration, Tom kicked the barricade.

With nowhere else to go; he realized he had to walk down through the tunnel to the next stop to search for a clear exit. The thought of this sent a shiver down his spine, his palms began to sweat and the hairs on his neck stood on end.

Tom took a cautious step toward the darkness. He was startled when he heard a scream as it echoed through the blackness. It sounded like a grown man. Tom took a step; followed by another. Then yet another step, until he stumbled over something on his left side. He knelt cautiously, trying to protect his injured leg as much as possible. He leaned forward, squinting to make the best of the feeble light. Tom saw that he had tripped over the corpse of a young man, in his early twenties. He was wearing a green polo shirt and blue jeans, soaked in blood. The clothes clung tightly to his body. His arm was bloody, with deep scratches. Tom looked closer because something was very wrong with his arm. Then he jumped back rapidly, nauseated. The arm had been gnawed upon. Something had been dining upon this young man's arm. Tom felt the bile climb into his throat; he vomited violently and fell onto his hands and knees.

Screams faded into the distance, but Tom tried to block them out of his mind. He stared at the filthy train tracks; the musky scent of the tracks and the smell of the rotting corpse overwhelmed his senses, making his stomach roil uneasily. Tom continued to focus on the dust-filled tracks. He watched the clumps of dust rolling from his knees, past his hands toward the tunnel, blown by a breeze that entered the stop behind him.

He placed his palms on the grimy wall and pulled himself to his feet. Tom stepped away from the wall and stood upright, facing the tunnel. Clenching his shaking fists, he began to walk toward the tunnel. As he stumbled past the corpse, shadows wrapped around him as if they were dragging him into their gaping maw. He disappeared into the darkness...

Tom warily began to walk through the tunnel, jumping at every little sound. After walking for a few minutes, he felt a bit frightened when he heard a roar not too far from him. He paused. He listened carefully, hearing nothing. He stood there alone in the dreary darkness. Then, he heard something tap ahead of him. The tapping began to get closer to him. He tried to make himself as small and still as possible, holding his breath so he could hear everything better. He identified the noise as a large mass of rats running toward him; he heard them squeaking and their feet patting on the ground. As they surrounded him, they began to gnaw on his feet. Tom tried to stand still in order to let them pass, but the little beasts began to run up his legs. He felt them feasting on his flesh. In pain and terror, Tom ran. He ran over the moving bodies of the rats, crushing them beneath him, even as they continued to climb him and bite him mercilessly. Tom struck himself over and over as he ran, trying to dislodge the rats. At last, there was light indicating the next stop; he began to sprint. The rats fell out of his trouser legs as he raced toward the next stop. He stared at the circular light indicated the next stop. He halted when he saw someone walking in full view of the light. Tom stood frozen to the spot. The hairs on the back of his neck stood upright. He began to run again. The person moved in front of the light again. The rats were gone. He hadn't even noticed them leaving.

*Why were the rats running?*

Tom stopped and stared straight down the tunnel.

*Should I follow the rats? It could be a survival mechanism.*

'Hello?' Tom shouted.

He decided to continue moving forward until he was startled by a roar from behind. He turned to look behind him and tripped over his own feet, and fell. He leaned forward to see what

appeared to be a human figure standing in front of him. He quickly jumped up and sprinted to the light. As he ran, he heard his footsteps and the steps of someone else right behind him. With no time to look to see who or what it was, he concentrated on getting to the next stop. He ran and ran but heard the steps getting closer and closer behind him, the breath of whatever pursued him louder and louder in his ears. He made it to the next stop. He climbed onto the platform and turned around. No one was there and nothing exited the tunnel behind him. Nothing at all.

Tom quickly looked around the new stop for a weapon of some sort. He found an iron bar and picked it up. As he turned to walk toward the tunnel, a fist slammed into the left side of his chin. The lower portion of his face shifted violently to the right. Having had no warning at all, he was completely unprepared for the hit. He staggered as he became dizzy and off-balance. He rushed to regain his balance and looked about to see who attacked him and was punched again, this time on the bridge of his nose; he was blinded by the immediate spray of blood and the pain. As he bent to cover his face, he was kicked in the stomach and punched repeatedly in the head. He lost his footing and fell onto the floor, dropping the iron bar. As he tried to catch his breath, he was kicked in the stomach a second time. His attacker gave him no time to mount an offense; Tom was grabbed by the scruff of his neck, punched in the face again, held down, and was stamped on. Tom took a massive beating until a gunshot interrupted the sounds of the one-sided fight. The sound of the shot rippled through the station. He heard a heavy 'flop'; it reminded Tom of the sound Anna made when she hit the ground after being hit by the car.

Tom looked to his right and saw a scruffy, old man a few feet away from him with several bullet holes in his chest and stomach.

Tom wiped his severely bruised and swollen face and looked at his hands. They were covered in blood. He sighed deeply and pulled himself up so he could take a good look at his saviour. Before him stood a woman with a dark complexion, leaning casually on her shotgun. She was about five foot eight, with her black hair tied in a ponytail. She wore dark green army trousers with a white vest covered in spots of blood. She looked no older than twenty-five.

'Hey there. How long you bin' down 'ere?'

Tom didn't answer immediately. He continued to stare timidly at her gun. He rolled over and pushed himself up onto his feet.

'I don't really know, about two days.'

'Ahh right, we didn't hear you or anything. If we knew you were there, buddy, we would have tried to come help you out. You look a mess, no offence.'

'None taken. I don't look much better than this normally anyway.' Tom laughed and so did the woman. 'I'm Tom. Thanks for saving my life.' Tom reached his hand out to shake her hand. She firmly clutched his hand.

'Danni, nice to meet you.'

'Do you know what's going on up above?'

'To be honest with ya, I don't. We weren't up there for long, we knew something was wrong and came down here. All that I can tell you is that people seem to be getting infected by something.'

Tom tried to fold his arms together and felt pain across his pectoral muscles and his ribs. He put his arms by his sides.

'What makes you say that?' asked Tom.

'Well, there was a group of about eight of us. One of them was a doctor. He spotted that we were all having a reaction to something but we can't work out what. We thought it was something down here from the rats but it can't be because people from above were coming down here with some of the symptoms already and...'

'What symptoms?' Tom interrupted

'Well, like midnight sweats, having nightmares, enlarged veins, blood shot eyes, losing senses, becoming aggressive and eventually becoming deadly predators.'

'But I have all those symptoms; does that mean I'm infected?' Tom said, with a note of challenge in his voice.

'Yes. We all are...' Danni said confidently.

There was silence at the stop. Tom looked at his arms and pinched one of them till it bled. He looked up at Danni. She had bloodshot eyes. They looked sore.

'This can't be right, how can you be sure?'

'The doctor did experiments on himself and others. We had to go to quite a length to be sure.'

'Where is he now then? Let me talk to him.'

'You'll have a job; he's dead.'

Tom looked to the ground in distress, scratching his head.

'How can you be so sure about this?'

'Basically, the doc started becoming aggressive, so I tied him up to a bench with a dog chain. In time he became worse, his skin became disgusting. His eyes turned red and actually bled and he was bleeding elsewhere too; he choked on his own blood at times. His teeth turned yellow. We kept him like that for awhile but he gained some strength. He broke out of the chains and killed five of our group. He was about to kill me, but my dad shot him in the head. It took more than one shot. It took a whole round. That tramp would have killed you, if it wasn't for me, and he only had the early signs, but he still would have killed you. The doc said the disease affects the brain. Something has gone airborne, most likely worldwide too. That's all I can tell you. What do you know?'

'How many are left in your group now?'

'There's me and my dad. What do you know?'

'I don't know anything. All I know is that one minute I was fine and about to propose to my girlfriend, and then all of a sudden the electricity and everything just stopped working, including the cars on the road. There was darkness.' Tom began to sob slightly. 'Then my girlfriend was killed just as I was about to propose to her.'

'Oh my god... I'm so sorry to hear that.' Danni sounded truly sad for him. She walked up to Tom and held his shoulders, forcing him to wince at the pain of her touch. 'I'm really sorry.' There was a moment of silence with Tom sniffing every so often. Danni continued to speak. 'Don't you think it sounds like an EMP?'

'Electric magnetic pulse? Like the ones on action films?' Tom asked, and Danni confirmed with a nod. Tom continued to speak. 'I suppose it could be. I never thought of that. But I was above here for a long time and I was attacked by some hovercraft machine that was shooting everything above ground. I can't think what it could be, a spaceship or an alien attack?'

'To be honest Tom, I couldn't tell you. It doesn't sound like human activity. You cannot trust anyone these days and if we're dealing with an alien invasion or some sort of attack from space. It would be best to stay down here.'

Tom looked disappointed and replied.

'I had a plan to go up there and go to my house. It might sound mad, but I have this old cassette player that has radio frequency on it that allows you to speak and communicate on other frequencies. I wanted to get to it and see if I could get any contact from anyone. Then we could try to see if we could get together with them to try to figure out what is going on and then try and stop this thing. Tom heard footsteps behind him and a bullet being jacked into a gun chamber.

'Me and my daughter are not going anywhere with you.' The gravelly voice of a man standing behind Tom bellowed, 'Turn around!' His voice echoed through the tunnel.

Tom turned around slowly, with his hands up, hoping not to startle this clearly crazy man. In front of him stood a huge, black man, holding an AK47. He was about 6 feet tall, wearing a red jumper and black trousers. His skin looked blotchy and his eyes were bloodshot

'Dad. Come on, now, he's fine.'

'I don't trust anyone.'

'Tom, this is my dad. You can call him Graham.'

'He won't be calling me anything.'

'Dad, we are going above. We have a good plan that could work. He has information about above.'

'I heard what he said. An alien invasion? Come on Danni. I thought you were more intelligent than that.'

'Dad, how can you be so sure? We don't know what's going on. We're going up above now; if you want to come, then please help us.'



Danni grabbed Tom by the arm and dragged him along with her. They walked toward the exit and up the steps. They reached the top and looked at the destruction above. Danni was on Tom's left and Graham was on his right. Graham gave Tom a handgun.

'You're probably gonna need this.'

'Cheers.' Tom put the gun behind his back in between his trousers and belt. He looked back at Graham. His eyes were filled with blood. Blood began to dribble slightly out of his right eye. Graham quickly wiped it away and began to cough.

Tom chose to ignore Graham's worsening symptoms. 'This is near Jubilee Park. I've already been here. Luckily, my house wasn't far from here; it's about a two minute walk. It might be quicker now that there's nowhere to walk around to get there.' Tom said.

Tom led while Danni and Graham followed, all of them on guard against any of the infected.

## **8**

They reached the street where Tom's house once was. Now there was nothing but open land with rocks and debris strewn all around. They walked down what was once the middle of the road, gazing at the remains of the houses. Tom tried to remember how things once looked. They continued onward until they reached Tom's old house. Tom stood where the pavement and his pathway to the door once were. He mentally compared what once was to this wasteland. He sighed and began worrying about how best to organize his search. The downstairs was visible. They could see where the sitting room led to the dining room, as well as the corridor that led to the kitchen and the back garden. The upstairs was completely obliterated. Tom stared hopelessly at the wreckage.

'I don't think we're gonna find the cassette player. We need to leave.' Graham said grouchily.

Tom ignored him and continued to stare at his former home. Graham looked at Danni forcefully. She moved to Tom to try to console him, but he gently pushed her away. He ran into the ruins.

'Tom!' Graham shouted, but Danni hushed him softly. They kept guard while Tom searched. First, he walked into the remains of the sitting room. Turning and shuffling in a circle, he searched the area. At first sight he saw only piled up rubble, but after relaxing his eyes, he began to make out some personal possessions, such as picture frames, Lucy's hairdryer, and Stewart's CD collection.

Tom spotted the box he kept in the attic filled with his father's belongings. He stumbled across the mounds of debris to get to the box; it was empty and badly burnt.

He continued to search through the remains of his home. He knelt down next to the box to see part of a newspaper clipping about his father's death. Part of the headline was still visible, reading 'Murder.' He looked to the right of the clipping and was astonished to see what he had found. He can't believe his luck; it was the cassette player. Even though it was covered in trash and debris, and was badly scratched and slightly burnt, he had found it.

'I've got it,' Tom shouted.

'Really?' said Graham, shocked.

Tom brushed the dust and rubble off the top of it.

‘We need power to work it Tom.’ Danni approached Tom. ‘And there isn’t any.’

‘No there is! The underground had lights on and the corner shop I went to had some electricity.’

Tom picked up the cassette player and walked around holding it in between his arms and his thighs, giving him a hunchbacked appearance. He searched for an outlet. He looked in the dining room and spotted one in part of a wall left standing; it was the corner of the dining room. Part of the creamy wallpaper was still visible.

With joy and excitement, Tom ran as well as he could while clumsily holding the recorder to the plug socket. He set the cassette player down gently. He plugged it into the wall and hoped for the best. Nothing happened. He stared at the lifeless player. Graham and Danni began to sympathize with him until the screen sprang to life. He picked up the microphone attached to the side and began to search the frequencies.

For a few minutes, Tom pressed buttons and looked obsessed with finding somebody, anybody. Graham and Danni waited in anticipation.

After five minutes, Danni and Graham began to lose hope.

‘Danni, you know as well as I do. This is a worldwide thing. No one is going to answer. If it wasn’t, people would have come and helped us.’ Graham looked stubborn. ‘Come on, let’s go, we’re in danger standing in the open like this.’

‘No, Dad, we can’t leave Tom here.’

‘You don’t even know the guy. He’s wasting our time. Let’s go.’ Graham reached out to grab Danni’s hand. Danni pulled her hand away and moved slightly to her right.

‘Let’s go now!’ Graham barked.

Graham grabbed her arm tightly and squeezed. Danni screamed in pain.

‘Get off me, you idiot.’ She slapped and punched him on the arm. Graham grabbed her by the neck and pushed her to the ground. Danni got back up and tried to run, but Graham stamped on her ankle and she fell to the ground in agony. He then grabbed her hair, punched her in the face and tossed her to the ground. She grabbed a brick and hit Graham on the head but it didn’t even faze him. He snatched the brick from Danni and casually tossed it aside. He bent over, clutched Danni by the neck and squeezed. Tom looked around to see Graham strangling Danni. Danni felt herself passing out, her throat tightened, no airflow able to get through, she saw black spots. Her vision was receding. She tried to get air but it was impossible. Tom calmly placed the headphones on top of the cassette player and threw himself at Graham. He launched into Graham’s waist in a rugby style tackle and continued to run. The force of his blow knocked Graham off his feet. Graham released Danni from his grip. She fell on her side and gasped for air. Graham was on his back.

‘This isn’t the fucking time to turn on each other.’

Tom stared at Graham’s face. There were now red veins on his face. His skin was grey and his teeth yellow. The inside of his mouth was a nasty black; his lips were covered in blood.

Graham didn't speak; instead he snarled loudly and shoved Tom off him. Graham stood. Tom charged at Graham, but Graham shifted to his side, turning his AK47 and hitting Tom in the face with the butt of the rifle. Tom hit the ground hard, fighting unconsciousness. Tom was able to quickly force himself onto his back; he kicked Graham as hard as he could in the kneecap. Graham's kneecap snapped under the force, the sound echoing through the air. Graham screamed in pain and fell onto the dusty ground, creating a cloud of dust around him. He clutched his shattered knee cap, moaning. Tom got off the ground and stood over Graham. Graham had changed dramatically; even his facial expressions had changed. He clearly was now a man after revenge. Tom pulled the gun from his trousers and aimed at Graham's head. Tom was stunned when he heard Danni pump a round into the chamber of her shotgun. He paused and looked at Danni. In shock, he was forced to look straight down the shotgun barrel.

'What are you doing Danni? He's changed. We need to kill him now before he kills us.'

'That's my dad. He hasn't changed, if he had changed he wouldn't be in pain now with his knee, You lose feeling.' Danni continued to point the gun at Tom, her finger hovered above the trigger. She slowly moved her finger onto the trigger and pondered the shot.

'Danni, don't do this. Look at him. He's changed, his skin, his teeth, he's aggressive. He just beat you up; he might have even killed you if it weren't for me.'

Graham appeared to be in less pain by the second. He laughed and pushed himself off the ground.

'Move,' Danni yelled at Tom.

Danni knocked Tom out of the way and shot Graham in the head. Blood spurted behind him and down his body. The blood hit Danni and even reached Tom. Danni continued to aim at Graham. Her shotgun began shaking wildly. Her eyes filled with tears, and she sobbed even as she continued to aim the shotgun. Tom pushed the shotgun down and pulled her to him in a tight hug. She dropped the weapon so she could hug him back. Tom moved his hands onto Danni's bruised cheeks and stared into her eyes; they looked bloodshot and full of tears, making her eyes shiny. Tom could see himself reflected in her eyes. Danni stared back at Tom's swollen, black and blue eyes. His eyes were also bloodshot, but less so than Danni's.

'That was so brave, Danni; I know that wasn't easy for you.'

Danni began to sob and cry in agony. Tom moved his hand behind her head and moved her head to rest on his shoulder and felt water, not just from her tears, but also from the sky as it began to rain.

It rained heavily while Tom and Danni stood in the open. Danni tried to regain her composure. She let go of Tom and tried to walk away.

'I'll leave you to it for a while.' Tom let go of Danni and she wandered away slowly.

Tom went back to the cassette player and, to his shock, he heard a muffled voice through the speaker.

'Hello is anyone there? What is your location?'

Tom rushed to the cassette player, held the microphone to his mouth and exhaled slowly. 'This is Thomas Williams. I am currently located in London. London is unrecognizable; there has been a massive crisis. I'm in need of support.'

'Hi Williams. We are aware of the problem in London and it will be sorted in no time.'

'What do you mean? Are you aware of this alien invasion?'

The line went quiet for what felt a lifetime for Tom.

'I don't know who you are, but all that has happened is the government has stopped people entering London because of the refurbishment that will be happening throughout the city. The whole area is being cleaned and refurbished.'

Tom paused in astonishment.

*Do people really believe that? This can't be an alien attack. The government is involved in this.*

'People have died. You seriously believe they would close London to do some refurbishment and clean it up a bit. I have nearly been killed a number of times by some floating machine...'

Tom was interrupted, 'Sir you need to calm down. They said that there is a pandemic only in the London area. The media suggested a disease came from infected rats or a maybe some kind of terrorist attack. So they have to shut off the whole of London with work transferred across the United Kingdom. They said it's for people's safety. They apologized for the noise disruptions for locals living near the London area.'

*I cannot believe that people have fallen for that, such an unrealistic reason for London to be closed. Humans are pathetic.*

'Look I'm losing my fucking patience here.' The line cut off and so did the power. Tom threw the microphone down and kicked the cassette player until it smashed into pieces. He was livid, distraught and fresh out of ideas.

Tom made his way to Danni. He walked past Graham's body, stepping carefully past the blood and bits of gore that hadn't yet washed away. She was sitting on what was once a car. Somehow part of the interior, a leather seat, remained intact; Danni sat there, elbows on her knees, her back slouched, with her hands supporting her head, staring at the ground. Tom joined her, but sat next to her legs, and stared at the ground. He saw miniature rivers forming on the concrete, washing away the dust and the blood.

He could no longer smell, taste or feel anything. Danni's breathing sounded blocked as if she had a cold, and she was becoming paler by the second.

'What now?' Danni asked, choking.

'Well, it's not a worldwide problem; it's only here in London. The government is involved. How are we ever going to stop this?'

'I don't know.'

Tom stared at the ground and thought for a moment.

*How can people be that stupid? What can I do now? How long have I got to live as a human before I turn into an aggressive lunatic? Will I even turn into one? Should I just shoot Danni and then myself?*

Tom grabbed his gun and stared at it. He pulled it up and aimed at his face. His hands shook, the veins on his hands looked more and more enflamed and seemed to have a shade of blackness to them. Tom pulled the gun down and set it on the waterlogged floor next to him. His thoughts were interrupted as a machine floated up from the wreckage. As it rose, mud fell off the sides of the hovercraft. The rain fell stronger and harder. The hovercraft reached its peak. It shone its light on Tom and Danni. Neither of them reacted; they sat there waiting for death. They were soon surrounded by two more hovercraft. Danni and Tom both stood, looking up into the rain-drenched sky.

*I can't quite believe this is the government's doing. Why are they doing this?*

Then, two rigid-bodied, armoured vehicles approached from either side of Tom and Danni and parked beside them, effectively blocking any escape attempt. The top opened and two uniformed soldiers jumped from each vehicle. They wore gas masks and pointed their guns at Tom and Danni.

'Freeze, drop your weapons, now!' a muffled voice shouted from under a gas mask.

Danni dropped her shotgun and Tom put his hands up. There was a moment of silence with no movement; Danni was suddenly shot and knocked off her feet. Tom stood still. He slowly turned his head and looked down to see Danni on the ground. Her clothes were skin tight from the rain; the lining of her bra visible through her thin shirt.

Tom was forced off his feet by a sharp pain in his chest. He landed on his back and faced the sky.

For a moment, Anna entered his mind, possibly for the last time. She looked happy. The flashback was of her smiling in Jubilee gardens in the sunshine, the sun bright and reflected off her sunglasses. The grass looked better than ever before. Anna's skin looked peachier, her lips luscious, and her eyes astounding in the sunshine. Tom focused on the grey skies and lost consciousness.

## **9**

Tom awakened in dimness; the only light source was the night sky that shone through the window, the only window in the room. As he regained his senses, he smelled a musky, damp stench. Staring into the dark, he identified the objects around him by their shapes. To his right, he saw some machinery; saws and other sharp objects hung on the wall. Straight ahead of him were four long bars. The bars led to a circular shape at the top with cables knotted and scattered across the floor below them. To his left seemed to be four pigs hanging upside down from the ceiling, swaying slightly. Below them, a little closer to Tom were two plastic boxes on a table with animals inside. He could hear the animals moving around in the boxes. Also on the table was a stand with three tubes with liquid inside. Hung on the chair next to the table was a long coat.

Horrified, Tom tried to stand; he was tied to a chair with his hands behind his back. Still soaked from the rain, water dribbled down his face.

'Hello?' Tom bellowed.

It echoed back to him at least seven times. He shouted over and over again until all the lights turned on so brightly that he couldn't see directly in front of him. He looked to the side, toward the hanging pigs, and realized they were naked corpses hanging upside down from their ankles. Their arms flopped loosely. A young woman, man, a child and an elderly lady hung there. As he continued to stare, he looked at the face of the young woman. Her face was covered in dark mould and loose skin with patches of green. Her hair looked wiry and as dry as hay. Tom's eyes welled up, his fists clenched, his arms gained strength to try and break free. As he clenched his fists, his nails dug into his splinter-filled hands forcing the splinters to dig further into his hands and bleed. The pain was excruciating but his adrenalin and rage blocked the pain. He began to scream as he stared at the face of the young woman, Anna. Her entire body was caped in white and grey mould; enlarged red veins have covered her entire body. Her ankles bled while she hung there and stained her body as it dripped down. She had plastic tubes going into her arms, legs and mouth. The tubes were linked with red and green liquid in vials that pumped through the tubes into her.

Next to her was Stewart, he looked like Anna, but was missing an arm. To Tom's horror, he saw a young girl next to Stewart, no older than ten. There was also an elderly woman. All four of them had tubes with liquid pumping into them.

Tom looked back to Anna's red and green patched face. She was barely recognizable.

A man stood in front of the light. The man's outline was visible but his front was blacked out from the bright light.

'Hello.'

Tom recognized the voice, but he couldn't quite identify the person it belonged to.

'Who are you?'

'That would be telling.'

'Well, what's going on? Surely I'm allowed to know that before you kill me?'

The figure laughed, then fell silent. Tom tried to focus on the figure but the light was too bright. It burned his eyes as he tried to focus.

'Well. I'm not going to kill you, quite the opposite actually. I've cured you.' The figure folded his arms together. 'I spoke to your friend, Danni, and she told me what her doc friend told her and, give him credit. He was right about people being infected...'

'Where is she?' Tom interrupted abruptly.

'I'm sorry to tell you, I couldn't cure her. She had to be executed.'

'How could you do this? How can you hang those bodies up and how dare you do this to...'  
Tom was interrupted by the man's unsympathetic voice.

'Look, I'm doing this for the people who aren't infected. This wasn't my fault, I'm trying to fix it and this is the best way to do it, Tom.'

'How the fuck do you know my name?'

The man began to walk to Tom's left and disappeared from sight. It was deathly silent again. The man began speaking from directly behind Tom. 'Do you want the whole story?'

'Yes. I want to know why my girlfriend was killed and my friends and everyone in London; and what gives you the right to use my girlfriend like an animal?'

'Well, I am sorry for your losses. But it wasn't my fault. Now, to explain what has been happening. I will tell you as simply as I can. Where to begin...' The man began to walk around Tom. His shoes scraped the concrete with each step. 'We scientists have planned and worked on this project for a very long time. The project's aim was to create a cure for cancer. But to do so, we had to create a sort of test cancer which, unfortunately, didn't end well. The cure was created by Lukas Vidolski and the cancer by Kenneth Williams.'

'Wait. What?' Tom paused in amazement.

*Was this why Dad was killed? For creating something that was obviously threatening to humans? Or did what he create kill him?*

'I said Lukas Vidolski created a cure and Kenneth Williams created a cancer. But the cancer he created wasn't actually a cancer, somehow he accidentally discovered a virus that mutates rapidly. The liquid he created, if inhaled or digested, affects the brain.'

'How would it affect the brain, what did he set out to do with this?'

'Ken's plan was to create this and test it against the cure. The cure never worked. It couldn't cure a rat or dog, not even a pig. Since the virus had already been inhaled by some, Ken became desperate. He decided to experiment on himself since humans are so very different from most animals. He changed the liquid slightly and tested a reaction with his own blood to see the effects. It thickened his blood but at a slow rate. We tested it on him fully and he had slight changes. The liquid affected him with the symptoms you had, the eyes, veins, cough, and aggressiveness. The cure worked for Ken. We don't know why. The liquid he made didn't affect him badly. But when we tested someone else, he reacted quickly. It took only a single day for someone to turn into a raging lunatic. People react to the virus at different speeds and it depends on how much you inhale or digest and how much of its original strength it has retained as it's travelled through the air. Now, you must be wondering how it got into the open?'

Tom sat there in silence, ashamed of his father.

'Well, Vidolski was working in the lab. He was trying to alter both the liquid and the cure to counteract each other. But of course he also wanted the cure to counteract any kind of disease similar to cancer. He worked until he was interrupted by some armed forces. We do not know who they were but they obviously knew what we were doing. They simply came into the lab and shot Vidolski dead. Unaware of what they were doing, they decided to have some fun and they smashed the lab up. To their stupidity, they smashed the cure and the virus. So the virus went on the floor and, like I said, it's deadly to inhale. My assistant pressed the alarm and evacuated the whole building, which was a bad idea. He should have sealed the building, keeping the dangerous fumes inside. Instead, the chemicals were released into the building's air conditioning. It was released into the air from open windows and open doors, but also

people's clothing. People already infected carried the disease out with them to infect everyone.' There was another moment of silence. The man continued to pace behind Tom, from left to right and back. He then continued with his narrative, 'I had to alert the governing bodies. I told them what happened and they didn't know what to do. So I told them, they had to shut London down and kill everyone who was infected, everyone in the London zone. This allowed them to use new high-tech armoury such as their hovercraft, new guns and the new tank cars for the army. I presented a survival presentation and gave them tips. They then decided it would be best to destroy half of London and block anyone outside of London trying to come in. Of course, it can't spread worldwide, it would be used up just from the population in London. The greater risk was people leaving London who were infected. And to stop that from happening, everyone had to die.'

'Do you think you made the right decision?' Tom awaited the answer but didn't get one. 'If you do, then you are a fucking moron. You're happy with it...'

'Don't you dare tell me how I feel. You have no idea what I've been through.' The man lost control and began to shout.

'I know you're a self-centered man with no morals. Reveal yourself.'

The figure walked in front of the light. Tom tried to see his face, yet the man still hugged the shadows.

'Reveal yourself!' Tom bellowed.

The lights went off. Tom was encased in darkness and greeted with silence. The silence became eerie and unbearable.

He tried again to break out of his bonds. From what he could tell, his hands were bound together with plastic of some sort. As he tried to break free, the plastic cut cruelly into his wrists.

The lights came back on; the figure was standing in front of him.

'You wanted me to reveal myself?'

The lights in front of Tom turned off and light from behind Tom turned on. Tom looked at the man's face. He had a black beard with some grey hair. The hairs on his head are the same texture and color as his facial hair. He had dark eyes and black roughed up hair, he wore a shirt and tie, a long white jacket, grey trousers and black shoes. It took Tom a few seconds to realize the man was his father, Ken Williams. As he realized this, he let out a gasp and spat at him. He felt both ashamed and enraged.

It all became clear. Tom didn't react quickly to the chemicals because Ken had the same blood; they were related. That was why Tom and Ken have been cured easily.

'How could you? You are fucking scum. I hate you. Why couldn't you just be dead?' Tom's rage clearly frightened Ken.

'Tom. I only did this project to help cure your Mum. That's how long this has been going on. But by the time I got something together. She died. Imagine how that made me feel.' Ken began to cry. 'My life was over. I wanted to try to help people, not for all this to happen.'



'You killed Anna! You killed everyone. This is your entire fault. I'm going to end this right here right now.' Tom tried to break loose but it's impossible. Tom screamed in pain and fury at his father.

'I didn't decide to pulse the whole of London with a blast of electromagnetic energy. That wasn't me; that was the government's doing. I found Anna and brought her here to try and...'

'You had time to pick up Anna's body to experiment on, but not to look for your son?' Tom interrupted and stared at him in disgust.

'I tried to help but realized she died from being hit by a car and not from the chemical.'

'So your instinct was to bring Anna back here and experiment on her and not to look for your son.'

'No, Tom. I couldn't find you. They started blowing everything up. I tried to look for you but I nearly got killed trying to find you.'

'What a hero you are.' Tom said sarcastically.

'Please, Tom. Don't hate me. I brought Anna back to see if I could bring her back to life with the liquid. It's a magical creation; she came back to life a few times but obviously was a little aggressive.'

'How fucking dare you.' Tom began to shake and screamed at Ken in his seat. Tears fell from his eyes. Ken ignored his cries and tried to carry on with the story.

'I had to fake my own death because I needed to find this cure. It may not make sense to you but people were aware of what I was doing. I had to stay away from you to protect you from the media.'

'Well that worked, didn't it Dad. Your death was everywhere.'

'I'm sorry.'

'No, you're not. Get me out of this.' Tom said forcefully.

'I can't do that.'

'Let me out now.' Tom shouted.

Ken grabbed a pair of scissors and cut the cable tie. Tom's hands felt numb. He had been able to feel the difference since he was cured, he could feel the injury on his leg and shoulder once again. Tom walked across the room to get used to standing and walking again. He smelled the dusky room and walked back towards Ken.

Tom swung his right hand towards Ken's face. His knuckles struck the left side of Ken's jaw, forcing him to the floor. Tom knelt beside Ken and gripped his collar, punching him again. After the second punch to Ken's shrunken face, Tom stood up and turned his back on Ken.

'I guess I deserved that.' Ken wearily said.

'We are going to finish this together, me and you Dad. Blow this place up... is that possible?'

Ken breathed heavily while pushing himself off the filthy ground. He stood upright. His shaking, withered hand felt his bloody mouth and nose.

‘Well, yes, but we wouldn’t make it out in time. It’s not much of a countdown. It erases files and then releases the chemicals created and then the building explodes.’

Tom searched the room for a desk of some sort. He looked to his right and saw a desk with televisions and buttons. He walked toward it. Ken followed in his tracks.

‘Tom, what are you doing?’ Ken asked in desperation.

‘Finishing all this.’

Tom reached the desk. The screens were showing CCTV footage. The building was completely empty. He looked through all the images; one stood out. The black and white footage showed a chamber, with Danni, chained to a wall. She didn’t look healthy. She was trying to break out of the chains. Some of her hair had fallen out, showing her scabby bald head in places. Her skin looked sweaty and bloody.

‘You said she was dead.’

‘I didn’t want to worry or stress you out Tom.’

Tom chuckled to himself at the irony of his Dad suddenly caring about his feelings. He moved his hand over a pair of scissors that were on the desk and secretly slid them up his sleeve. Ken continued to speak.

‘She is pretty much dead anyway isn’t she? Like us, we’re dead, how are we ever going to survive this? That’s why I don’t want to waste my work. All these years, I’ve worked on this and now you want me to waste all those years and all the risks I’ve taken by blowing this place up?’ Ken began to sound hysterical.

‘So...’ There was a pause as Tom positioned the scissors up his right sleeve with his finger tips, ‘Are you going to help me Dad?’

Ken ignored what Tom said, pulled him away from the desk and separated Tom from it by standing in front of him.

‘Don’t do anything silly, now, Tom.’ Ken snarled.

Tom let the scissors slide down to his fingers into his palm. He gripped the handle and prepared for the worst.

‘Dad, don’t be stupid. Blow this place up or I’ll have to do it myself.’

‘Tom, son, I am not going to do that and neither are you.’ Ken lowered his voice to a whisper, ‘This has taken me years to build. Don’t ruin it now.’

They stared at each other, eye to eye. They weighed each other. Thinking what to do and what consequences there could be.

‘Dad, you’re not like I remember you. You have changed into a heartless control freak.’ Tom stared at his father’s emotionless face. ‘Mum will be turning in her grave and I wish you were dead.’

Ken's smug look turned into one of irritation and fury. Ken raised his hand to grab Tom by the throat. In one quick motion, Tom grabbed Ken's arm with his left hand, and with his right hand, stabbed the scissors into Ken's throat and kicked him in the stomach. Ken stumbled and fell on his back; he jerked the scissors out of his neck and tossed them aside. He looked frantic, trying to stop the blood gushing from his neck. It spilled out at a rapid pace, but that didn't bother Tom. He was so used to death and blood now.

'You belong in hell. You won't be joining Mum in heaven and I'm sure she's ashamed of you.'

He continued to watch his father struggle and squirm on the floor. Ken removed his bloody hands from his neck and stared at Tom. Ken slowly began to lose air, his breathing slowed. He gasped and struggled to get air. He wriggled on the floor in desperation; he looked at Tom and reached his hand out to him. Tom pushed Ken's hand onto the floor. Ken's breathing stopped. His body looked rigid, his eyes wide open and full of fear.

Tom stared at the corpse that lay before him. He calmly turned to the computer and searched for a button. It didn't take long, he found a plastic lid. He lifted it up and a red button was underneath. His hand hovered above it. He paused for a moment.

*Is there any other way to end this?*

Tom didn't hesitate for long. He pressed the button and a loud alarm sounded repeatedly, his ear drums almost burst at the sound. Red warning lights turned on at the double doors that were chained and locked. He took a last look at Danni. She saved his life and now he wanted to put her out of her misery. He walked away from the desk and stood next to his father's bloody body. His dead eyes were still open. He wondered why his father turned into a sociopathic monster. Tom thought back to the time he, Ken, and his mother, Sarah, had spent at Disney World in Florida as a child. It was his happiest memory of the three of them together. In his mind, Sarah smiled and held Tom's hand while Ken held a camera to his face nonstop, taking photos of Sarah and Tom and their surroundings. He imagined himself in the parade, smiling characters and smiling spectators and his feeling of joy; an emotion which now felt rare to him. He stared at the castle, and the memory faded. Tom returned to the unknown warehouse where he was faced with his father's lifeless eyes. He continued to stare for a moment. He walked toward the chair where he was recently tied up. He sat down casually; his back slumped and his legs wide open. He awaited his death.

He thought of Anna and how different his life could have ended. He could have gotten married, had children, moved into a big house, gotten a job, and more importantly, had a great life and died a happy man. He thought of Anna at her best, he had flashbacks of the day at Jubilee Gardens. As he does, the room began to shake.

*Should I let myself die or should I try and get out of here? I'm cured; I could leave London alive and maybe try to move on from all of this. Meet someone new, make a family, create the dreams I have dreamt of. Lucy or Dan could be alive? I might reunite with one of them.*

He looked to Anna's body and calmly walked over to her and knelt, balancing on his toes and then squatted back, on his heels. He stared at her face; he can hardly tell the face belonged to Anna, but the facial structure was the same as ever. Tears began to roll down his face.

He had a dilemma and didn't have time to think. He looked around for an exit, the double doors were chained and locked but to his right, he saw a floor with an open hatch.

An inferno blew through the warehouse; it smashed its way through the wall. The wall exploded and the full blast of the fire entered the room. It neared Tom at such a speed that he was forced him to dive toward the open hatch. The heat hit him quickly; it became hotter by the second. As he dove, he reached as far as he could, and hoped his reach was long enough. The hatch looked like a mirage, as it shimmered from the heat. The flames reached his toes and began to crawl up his body. He screamed. His throat became numb from his shrieks and he ran out of air. His skin peeled from his muscles.

His burned body fell closer. He was close enough to see what was down there. It was either an emergency exit or an underground tunnel.

The flames overtook him and the building was blown to smithereens. The building collapsed and became part of the destruction around it. Smoke, ash and flames floated into the atmosphere; the soaked skies became darker, filled with smoke and ash creating a dust cloud over London.

Silence echoed throughout the city.

## Part 2

### 10

*I attempt to open my eyes. My upper eye lid is stuck to the lower. I force them shut; then force them open. They become unstuck, but my lashes stick to my cheek. I use my index finger and thumb to pull my upper eye lid away from my eye, which allows the lashes to return to their natural position.*

*I try to focus, my sight is blurry. I'm welcomed to an uncomfortable burning sensation.*

*My sight regains some of its clarity. As I continue to stare straight up from my position, I identify a fierce ball of light, burning my eyes. I remember, the hover craft shooting at me, chasing me, trying to kill me... It killed Anna!*

Tom screamed in fear. He reached to his right and grabbed the nearest object. A pint glass of water sat on the table beside him. He clutched the glass, using his stomach muscles to sit on his knees with the heels of his feet on his backside to balance him, which allowed him to throw the glass up at the light. As the glass smashed on the ceiling, the light disappeared and water flicked onto his face.

Tom looked up to the ceiling and saw the remains of a light bulb.

Confused and disoriented, he looked down to his clothing; he wore a white suit, an all in one paper suit. He looked at his surroundings, staying still on the bed he was on.

The walls and all the objects were white. The walls were plain; the bedside table had a vase and a dead plant. The leaves from the plant were scattered on the top of the table. They were brown and looked like ash. The stem in the glass was a lifeless green and yellow.

In frustration, Tom wiped the water off his face, but as he did, he stopped himself. He felt his face, it felt different. He used his fingertips to stroke the side of his head, from his forehead down his cheek to his chin. It felt lumpy and uneven. Tom jumped out of the bed and looked at his arms. He had severe burns. As he felt his burns, he had a flashback of killing his father. He saw his father squirming on the floor in desperation, scissors poking out of his neck, blood running out like a river. His father's death left his mind and a smouldering inferno entered, it destroyed the walls around him, it blasted toward him, the heat was excruciating.

He jolted from the memory. He felt his face again, feeling the right side and then the left. The right felt lumpy, whereas the left didn't. He felt his nose, which was nonexistent on the right side with some remains on the left. Tom let out a cry of resentment.

'What the fuck? What the fuck is this? Where am I?' Tom shouted and continued to scream.

He moved toward the corner of the room to his left and leaned against it with his shoulder, facing the corner. There was a thunderous knock on the door.

'Mr. Williams, are you okay?' asked a female voice behind the door.

Shaking, he lifted his right trouser leg; there were some brown burn marks and no leg hair. He lifted his left side up, it was a mess. Although his leg felt normal, it wasn't. Holding his prosthetic leg in disbelief, he used his muscles to tense the leg that no longer existed. It felt as if it was still attached to him. He then moved his big toe, followed by the others. As he moved parts of the leg that no longer existed, he looked at his prosthetic leg which didn't move in the slightest.

Tom began to scream and to punch and head butt the wall repeatedly.

'Mr. Williams, calm down right now!' the woman said sternly.

Tom continued to punch and head butt the wall, harder and harder.

'Right, Mr. Williams, you've given us no choice, we're coming in.'

An unlocking sound came from the door; it swung open, hitting the wall. Two men quickly entered the room. They wore white jackets with blue trousers. At the entrance stood a woman, she wore the same type of clothing.

Tom turned from the wall and swung his right fist at the first man and hit him on the left side of his jaw. The speed of the man's pace and the strength of the punch knocked him onto the floor. Tom saw the other man pull out a police bat from the back of his trousers and charge towards Tom. Tom kicked him with his prosthetic leg in the stomach; which winded the man, he remained standing as he hit Tom on his left cheek and his nose which knocked Tom forcefully to the side. Tom looked up, his eye watering and his nose bleeding. The bat neared his face again; Tom ducked and ran toward the man. Tom grappled with him, wrapping his arms around the man's waist, digging his shoulder into his lower stomach, and forcing him into the wall.

Tom heard the bat bounce off the floor behind him. He grabbed the man, pulled him away from the wall, shoved him forcefully back into it again, and punched him repeatedly in the face. As the man slanted down the wall, unconscious, the other man began to stand. Tom grabbed the bat off the floor and walked toward the man who struggled to stand. Tom hit the man on the top of his head, and knocked him out. He landed on the floor face down.

Tom looked at the two men on the floor and looked at the door, ready to make his exit. He was stunned to see the woman at the door holding a syringe was Lucy.

'What the fuck's going on Lucy? Where's Dan?'

'I don't know what...'

'Lucy, it's me, Tom!'

'Mr. Williams, please calm down and get back into bed.'

'Lucy, Stewart is dead and so is Anna. We're next if we don't move.'

'Get into your bed now!' Lucy said, clutching a bat in her shaking right hand and a syringe in her left.

'Fuck sake, Lucy.'

Tom walked up to Lucy, but as he did, she swung the bat and hit him on the head. Tom staggered to his left. As he regained his focus, Lucy tried to stab him in the neck with the syringe. Tom grabbed her arm and knocked the syringe out of her hand onto the floor. He continued to hold her arm, grabbed her white jacket and threw her across the floor to his right. She slid and stayed on the ground curled up.

‘Please don’t hurt me,’ cried Lucy.

Tom didn’t say anything; he was confused about why Lucy didn’t know him.

He left the room and entered the shadowy corridor, which was as dull as the room. It looked grey with nothing in sight, except shadows.

He looked around to determine his best route of escape. To his right was a man in an army uniform with a gun. Tom decided to run to his left. The man shot at Tom, but missed.

As Tom neared the end of the corridor, another man appeared. He darted from behind the wall at the end of the corridor and shot at Tom. He missed the first shot but then hit Tom in the chest, halting him in his tracks. Tom felt the piercing pain, followed by another two. The third shot hit him in the throat; Tom struggled to catch his breath. He was hit with another bullet on the pectoral muscle, knocking him flat onto his back.

Tom clutched his throat, trying to breathe; then looked down at his body, realizing there was no blood from the wounds.

As his vision blurred and the room darkened, he saw Lucy standing over him looking down. She paused before pulling a syringe from her pocket. She knelt down, plunged the syringe into his neck, and injected the liquid.

## **11**

Tom lay in bed, unconscious. Three men stood around him. The two men on either side of the bed wore white and blue uniforms; the bald man at the end of the bed wore a brown suit.

‘He’s a very sick man. I thought he was getting better, but obviously not; we’re back to stage one,’ the suited man said.

‘Should we keep him sedated?’ asked one of the other men.

‘No, we’ll keep him tied down for now. I suppose we should have expected this; good days and bad days. I’ll speak to him when he comes round.’

The other two men departed, leaving the suited man and Tom alone.

‘Mr. Williams.’

Tom heard the voice echo throughout his head.

‘Mr. Williams, if you can hear me, I need you to try and focus. We need to have a chat about this situation and remind you why you are here.’

Tom tried to wake up. The voice continued to echo through his head. ‘Get up, Tom!’

Tom jerked awake and sat up. He tried to move his hands but they were secured in brown leather cuffs to either side of the bed.

‘Good. Mr. Williams are you listening carefully?’

‘Where am I?’

‘Right. Listen to me. You’re not well, you’ve been here a long time now, we made progress but you have now reverted.’

‘Where the fuck am I?’

‘Mr. Williams, occasionally you have memory lapses when your illness worsens. I’ll remind you. You’re in a mental institution. We’ve made progress with you, but now you seem to have reverted back to this stage.’

‘Mental institution? You must have the wrong guy. I’m completely sane. Let me out of here.’ Tom struggled weakly as he tried to break the cuffs. ‘Let me out right now!’

‘Mr. Williams I need you to calm down and listen to me.’ The man leaned toward Tom and asked, ‘What is my name?’

‘I don’t fucking know who you are, I’ve never seen you before.’

‘Mr. Williams, this is very disappointing. You’ve been here for more than a year and you don’t know who I am.’

‘I have not been here more than a year.’

‘Yes, you have. Do you want me to show you all the records and tests? You have been here more than a year after you decided to kill thousands of people. You killed parents, grandparents and children. Do you even remember what building it was? Sorry to sound harsh, Mr. Williams, but you obviously do not remember the drastic actions you decided to take.’

‘What? No I didn’t do that! I was in...’

‘Let me guess. You were in a lab. Your dad was there, Anna’s and Stewart’s corpses were hung upside down; you killed your dad and made the building self-destruct by pressing a red button. Does that sound about right?’

Tom paused and stared at the man.

‘What? How?’

‘We know each other better than you think. I would shake your hand but... obviously your hands are tied. I’m Doctor Miller. I have been fully involved in your recovery. I’ve helped you.’

‘I don’t know what’s going on, just please let me go.’

‘I’m afraid that’s never going to be possible. You, Mr. Williams, have been deemed by the courts a danger to the public. Although, I would love to get you back out there working and earning a living.’

‘If all this is true, how do you explain Anna’s, Stewart’s, Danni’s, and my father’s deaths?’



'They never existed. Well, not how you imagine them. You killed your father in the blast. Anna is still alive, but the last time you saw her, you refused to believe it was her. Stewart was an old school friend as were as Dan and Lucy; you haven't seen them for years.'

'Lucy works here! I saw her, she injected me with...'

'That is a woman named Lucy, yes, but she only works here. She isn't your old school friend.'

'Well how did I recognize her from here if I'm thinking about someone else?'

'You are altering your reality to fit your fantasy. Since a woman named Lucy works here and happens to have the same name as a girl named Lucy you remember from your school, you've managed to work this Lucy's face into your quite elaborate fantasy.'

Tom lay back on his bed and stared at the ceiling.

He thought of the trauma he'd been through. Anna's death had felt so realistic. He remembered cutting down her corpse and holding her dead body. He remembered the destruction, the smell of smoke returned to his nose. He even felt the pain of the burns on his flesh. He remembered meeting Graham and Danni on the underground and watching Graham go crazy. He clearly remembered murdering his own father, in order to save others. After thinking things through for a bit, he looked over at Doctor Miller who stood to his left.

'That's it. Take a deep breath in through your nose, out through your mouth. That's it. You're back in the real world now.'

'What happened?'

'You entered a fugue state. You do it quite often, you 'zone out' on us. We've determined you aren't having seizures, but believe you think you are having some sort of flashback to perceived events in your falsified past. What did you think of during this state?'

'I dreamt...'

'A memory? Was it what happened in your past before?'

'No. I dreamt of a long distant memory of me at Disney World Florida with my parents.'

'Oh brilliant, this is a good start to your recovery, Tom. Keep having these real, happy memories and we can move on from this mad obsession you have with this fake memory.'

'Is London normal then?'

'London is as perfectly normal as it ever has been. We can go there if you want, I will show you around. I'll organise a day for us to go, but for now, you need some rest. Here, take this...'  
Miller pulls out a small white tube from his jacket, pops open the lid and tips two red tablets into the palm of his hand. 'This medication will keep you relaxed so you can get a good night's sleep for tomorrow and I will see if we can go into London.'

Tom paused and looked at Miller more closely.

He appeared to be in his fifties; he was bald, with dark eyes that looked black. His suit was clean with no flecks of lint, dandruff or other specks of dirt to mar its appearance. His name

badge read 'Dr. Michael Miller'. He was almost petite, his bones were so small; he was only about five foot, seven inches, with narrow shoulders.

'Come on Tom, open your mouth.'

Tom hesitated, but eventually opened his mouth. Miller put one tablet in Tom's mouth, poured some water into his mouth and allowed him to swallow the tablet. Then he put the other tablet in Tom's mouth and gave him more water.

'You will feel drowsy very quickly. Once you fall asleep, I will un-cuff your wrists. I will see you in the morning, Tom.'

Miller stood by the bed until Tom's eyes closed. Miller sighed as he un-cuffed Tom's wrists, then, he left the room, locking the door behind him.

## **12**

Tom and Miller walked along the Jubilee Gardens.

It was a sunny day in London; the sun glistened off the river Thames and the surrounding buildings. The London Eye gleamed from the rays. The grass looked green and healthy, with no dead spots in sight. The Thames was dark blue with boats cruising along the river and seagulls fluttering around the water.

'See Tom, London is normal. You are very sick and in need of my help. You just need me to help you.'

Tom and Miller walked to the London Eye, Tom looked up at it smiling.

'Last time I was here, this was scattered all across the gardens there.' Tom looked to the green, open field.

'Well, in your dreams, hey Tom?'

A light, engine sound echoed through Tom's ears.

'Can you hear that, Doctor?'

'Hear wh...'

Miller was shot before he could answer Tom. Miller collapsed to the ground covered in bullet holes.

Tom looked behind him to see the surrounding buildings exploding into smithereens. He watched as the trees lost their leaves, the grass turned into nothing but mud, the swings and climbing frames burned into orange and grey rust. The children sitting on the swings burst into flames and disappeared.

Soon, Tom was alone; even Miller's body had disappeared.

Then he heard a creaking sound followed by a number of snapping sounds. Tom watched as the ground ahead of him, the London Eye moved inland. Tom turned around and began to walk backward; he saw the London Eye falling. As it reached him, he could hear Dr. Miller's voice fading in and out and echoing eerily in his mind.

'Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams. Wake up.'

The Eye was a foot from hitting the ground; it exploded violently, launching Tom into the middle of the street. He hastily got back onto his feet. As he turned to run, Anna stood right in front of him. Her pupils were a deep red, blood trickled from her eyes, leaking down to her cheeks and onto her blood-stained neck, which was covered in bloody hand marks. She had no expression, her skin was a light cream colour and her neck was covered in black, thick veins. She smiled, revealing yellow stumps for teeth and pitch black gums.

A hovercraft distracted Tom from looking at Anna any longer. It arose from seemingly nowhere. Anna began to scream, the scream pierced Tom's ears. He stared at Anna's mouth opening wider and wider. The hovercraft shot the ground around Tom and Anna. It shot a bullet towards Tom's head that seemed to travel in slow motion, as it reached his face, it forced him to awaken from his nightmare.

Tom sat up straight, short of breath, sweat dripping down his forehead and running down his stubbled face in rivulets. Miller stood at the end of the bed.

'You okay, Mr. Williams?'

Tom paused as he tried to catch his breath. He grabbed the glass of water next to his bed, sipped, and stared at Miller.

'Yeah, just a bad dream.'

'Care to share?'

'I can't really remember it, but I think my Mum was killed, was a childhood nightmare.'

'Okay, Mr. Williams. I have some good news. We can go into London today, but I need to introduce you to someone. Come in, Smith.'

The door opened and a young man entered. He wore black shoes, trousers, blazer and tie, with a white shirt and identification badge on his right pocket on the blazer. His blonde hair was spiked at the front. His shoulders were wide and sloped, his arms hung loose as he swaggered toward the bed. A gun was strapped to his waist.

'Mr. Williams, this is Agent Smith. He'll be coming to London with us. I trust that you'll be on your best behaviour, but rules are rules. You're a danger to the public, so we have to take precautions, I'm afraid.'

Smith folded his arms, revealing bulging biceps. 'Good to meet you, Mr. Williams. If you decide to make a run for it, I will not hesitate to shoot you, and these are not rubber bullets, understood?'

'Understood,' Tom said sarcastically.

'Good to see you two getting on so well already. Agent Smith and I will leave you to get ready now. I have left you some normal clothes to wear while in London. I'm assuming you don't want to wear that white, unflattering all in-one paper suit,' Miller chuckled.

Miller and Smith left the room and shut the door. A faint locking sound could be heard after the door closed.

Tom walked toward the chest of drawers opposite his bed. There were clothes folded on the top of it. Tom took the clothes and placed them on his bed.

The clothes Miller left him were identical to the clothes Tom wore at Jubilee Gardens with Anna. Tom thought of the sun shining into his eyes, Anna's eyes sparkling, the deep blue water full of energy, he remembered the breeze blowing across his skin.

*These are memories; they are not hallucinations. How could I have been fooled! They must be covering up what happened. I cannot be the only one to be alive after it. I need to get out of here.*

Tom unzipped his jumpsuit and let it drop onto the ground. It gathered at his feet and he kicked it aside. He quickly grabbed the shirt and blue jeans and got dressed.

He looked at himself; he imagined the grass stains from Jubilee Gardens on his knees, the loose grass on his shirt and bits of grass floating to the ground from his hair as he wiped his head.

Tom looked at the drawers where his clothes were. Next to the drawers were a pair of white Nike trainers and a pair of socks. Tom picked them up and sat on his bed. He put on the socks and forced on the white, undersized Nike trainers.

'Mr. Williams, are you okay?' Miller's voice sounded muffled from behind the door.

'Yes, I'm ready now.' Tom said confidently.

As the door unlocked and swung open, Smith walked into the room. Tom launched himself at him and swung his fist. Smith ducked under Tom's arm and grabbed his torso, lifted him up, and slammed Tom down onto the ground. Tom let out a grunt as he landed hard on his back. Tom grabbed Smith by the collar and threw another punch toward him. His knuckles dug into Smith's eye, forcing Smith to lose his grip. Tom kicked Smith's face over and over; Smith covered his face with his hands.

Smith held his eye in agony. Tom turned to the exit, but was confronted by Miller, holding a rifle. He fired at Tom, who felt a sharp pain in his neck. Feeling drowsy, Tom slid his fingertips down his neck, grasping something pointy and sharp.

He attempted to pull it out, but the room became dark, and his eyelids felt heavier and heavier before he finished. Tom lost all feeling and thumped to the floor.

## **13**

Miller's voice faded in and out. The words were unclear.

Tom began to regain his senses. A cooling breeze caressed his body; he heard a light drone of traffic and children's laughter nearby. The sun began to touch his skin; he smelled hot dogs and sunscreen.

Tom opened his eyes and sat up. As his sight improved, he recognised the sounds and smells of the location; he knew exactly where he was.

'Hello, Tom, nice of you to join us, finally,' Miller said smugly.

He looked around Jubilee Gardens, looking at the grass, the trees, the birds, the River Thames and, of course, the London Eye.

*How can this be? I saw all this; it was mud and was completely fucked. Maybe I did dream it, and I'm really ill. There's no way I could see the Eye destroyed like it was and it still be here now.*

Tom didn't speak and didn't listen to Miller who was speaking to him. Tom looked at Miller, he was moving his mouth, but no sound was hitting Tom's eardrums. Miller's voice was overpowered by Tom's shock and disbelief and the noise of the laughter from the surrounding crowds.

Smith stood next to Tom with his arms folded, looking down at Tom.

'I... I cannot... can't hear what you're saying Doctor.' Tom stuttered in disbelief.

'I said do you want an ice cream?'

'I... I'm not hungry.'

'What about you, Smith? Want a hot dog?' Miller looked up from where he sat, squinting in order to see Smith.

'Yeah, alright then, cheers.'

'Fantastic. Get two hot dogs, then. I don't want any sauces. Thanks.'

Smith looked confusingly at Miller, then pulled out a leather wallet and walked away.

'Right, Mr. Williams, do you believe me now? You told me once that you came here and it was all dead, everything was burnt and there was no grass and the Eye was gone. Well, here you are, at Jubilee Gardens in the rare sunshine here in London.' Miller looked at Tom, waiting for a response, but Tom only stared at the green grass. Miller continued, 'This is the real world. The one that seemed so real to you is not real. There is no virus or any lunatics running around and Anna is still alive.'

'To me she isn't.'

'Tom, you can move on and live a happy life. You can recuperate mentally and try to regain your normal self and live the rest of your life. Do you want to meet her?'

'Meet who?'

'Anna, of course.'

Tom turned his head while still looking at the grass.

'Okay, then whe...'

'Okay good. Tom, I'd like you to meet your girlfriend, Anna.'

Tom looked behind him and saw a brunette woman with a young boy, no older than six. The boy held tightly to the woman's hand.

She wore a yellow, flower print top with denim shorts that clung to her thighs and ended two inches above her knees. The boy wore an orange t-shirt with a cartoon character on the front.

‘And your son, Jack.’ Miller said slowly.

Tom stood hastily and turned towards them both. He took a step. Anna smiled at him, while Jack hid behind her leg.

‘Don’t be shy Jack, it’s your daddy.’ Miller strained to stand.

‘Hi, Tom.’ Anna said.

Tom stared at her in silence. He folded his arms and turned toward the River Thames.

*This can’t be happening. I’d remember having a kid!*

‘Why didn’t you tell me I had a child?’ Tom turned and shouted at Miller. ‘Tom, not now, or I’ll have to take you back. You are embarrassing yourself by shouting out loud here.’

Tom stared at Miller and Miller stared into Tom’s eyes.

‘This isn’t Anna and that’s not my son.’

‘How can you say that?’ Anna shouted. ‘You come here right now and say that to his face and mine.’

Tom walked up to Anna and looked her right in the face. She looked similar to the way he remembered Anna. He looked at her freckly nose, as she tried to hold back her tears; he noticed her nose crinkle as she frowned. Tom squatted next to the child. ‘Hello. Do you know who I am?’ Tom asked Jack.

Jack stood there as he looked at Tom. He hesitated for a moment as he looked up to Anna.

‘You’re Daddy.’

Tom looked into Jack’s light blue eyes, as shiny as crystals. His light brown hair was soft and neatly brushed to one side. Tom stroked Jack’s soft and spongy cheek. Tom’s eyes began to water and the tears dripped off his lower lashes. He stood up and stepped back from Anna and Jack.

‘Is that enough, Tom?’ Miller asked.

Tom didn’t answer as he began to sob. He put his hands over his mouth and nose and turned again to look at the river. His crying continued as he kept his back turned to the others.

‘Tom please...’ Miller interrupted Anna.

‘I think that’s enough for today, Anna. Let him rest. We’ll see you again soon.’

Anna stood waiting for Tom to turn around to look at her.

‘Come on then, Jacko. Daddy’s still not well.’

‘Sorry about this, Anna. Sorry, Jack, but Daddy is a bit upset today.’

Smith returned with two hot dogs and an ice cream.

'Here you go Jack, an ice cream for you.' Miller snatched the ice cream from Smith's grasp and gently held it in front of Jack, who took it slowly from Miller's hand. Smith sighed as he began to eat his hot dog.

'What do you say, Jacko?' Anna nudged Jack.

'Thank you, Dr. Miller.' Jack said, under his breath.

'That's okay. Me and Daddy'll see you soon. Bye bye. Bye, Anna.'

Anna and Jack looked at Tom before they turned and walked away.

Smith handed Miller a hot dog and they both walked to Tom.

'I know that must have been hard for you but...' Tom interrupted Miller.

'Shut the fuck up. I have no fucking idea who they were. That was not Anna and that was not my son.'

'It is. That's the only family you've got Tom. Everyone close to you is dead and you need to realise it. Move on from this fantasy world you created.' Miller grabbed Tom's shoulder and pulled Tom toward him. 'You need to get a grip Tom, we've come backwards here. You're ill. That was your real family. Stop focusing on that dream you had and that fake life of yours. You're here and you're living right now.' Miller loosened his grip while Tom stared at the River Thames.

'We gonna go back soon?' Smith mumbled with his mouthful of hotdog.

'Yes, I think that may be best.'

'Can we walk toward the footbridge on the main road that leads to Waterloo station?' Tom asked.

'I'm sure we can. We can't take too long.' Miller replied.

Miller and Tom led the way and Smith swaggered behind.

'Why do you want to go walk here?' Miller asked.

'Because I want to see more people.'

Tom experimented walking with his prosthetic leg. He didn't struggle and it felt completely natural.

'How does this leg feel normal to walk on? I could run with this leg if I wanted to.'

'Well, don't attempt it, or Smith will have to kill you. But it's got joints allowing you to bend and move your ankle and foot and it is linked to your nerves so that it feels as if you have a normal human leg. I created it myself.'

When they reached the road, Tom breathed easier as he watched black taxis, red buses, cars and pedestrians. The footbridge was very congested with people and Tom began to smile.

*It's all so normal, as if nothing happened. Maybe nothing did happen and I am well and truly unstable.*

*But how could I not remember Anna or my own son or killing a lot of people? This still doesn't make sense.*

Tom's thoughts were interrupted when he saw a girl lying in the middle of the road, her legs were missing. Blood stained the road around her. The road began to crumble and shake. Tom felt lightheaded; he exhaled slowly. He leaned forward clutching his knees as he bent over. Miller looked down at Tom and moved his hotdog toward Tom's face.

'Here Tom, eat some of this. You need energy.' Miller said calmly.

Tom began to stumble backward; Smith grabbed him to keep him from falling.

'Jesus, what the fuck's up with him?' Smith shouted at Miller.

'I'm not sure. Tom?'

Tom regained his balance, but then pretended to be off-balance. Miller began to panic as Tom didn't respond.

'Tom? Answer me.'

As Miller removed his phone from his blazer pocket, Tom stood upright and elbowed Smith in the face, cracking his nose. Smith screamed out in pain; as he reached for his gun, Tom punched Smith on his already broken nose, unclipped the gun from Smith's belt and threw it into the road. Miller grabbed Tom's shirt, but Tom simply turned and shoved Miller to the ground. Tom didn't hesitate; he shifted quickly and shoved his shoulder into Smith's face. Smith was jolted to the side and looked back at Tom, dazed. Tom kicked Smith's legs; knocking his feet from under him. Smith fell, winded, flat on his back.

Tom glanced briefly at the two men on the ground in front of him. Without hesitation, Tom turned and began to run. Almost immediately, he stumbled, falling forward. He protected his face by putting his hands in front of him on the congested concrete path.

*I need to get used to this.*

Tom pushed himself up and attempted to run again. He sprinted into the road. The cars beeped at him, with people occasionally shouting abuse at him out their windows.

Smith looked around and spotted Tom running down the path, knocking people out of his way.

'Miller, get up! He's getting away,' Smith shouted. Smith pulled out a walkie-talkie and spoke into it.

'In need of support, the patient is making a run for it.'

Smith put the walkie-talkie in his pocket and attached an ear piece. He ran to get his gun out of the road. He stood there, picked up the gun and attached it to his belt. A car skidded toward him beeping its horn. He jumped out of the way and ran in Tom's direction.

Miller got up and watched as Smith galloped after Tom.

A black van approached Miller and stopped. The side door slid open. A muscular, ebony man stared at him. Miller hastily jumped into the van and it sped off with a sharp screech.



*I don't know how long I can run. I'm not the fittest person. Should I hide out in a building? There must be an abandoned building nearby where I can hide out and plan my next move.*

As Tom reached the next street corner, he took a left under some trees. He entered another street, similar to the last; busy traffic, suited men running or cycling, the occasional tourist or foreign tourist observing, taking photos of the buildings. Tom didn't pause; he kept running. He looked behind him. There is no sign of Smith or Miller.

Tom continued to run in the boiling temperatures. His cheeks overheated and his whole body ached. His shirt was damp and it stuck to his skin. His mouth was dry, his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. He could no longer swallow. His breathing was wheezy.

*Come on. Get to a hideout.*

Tom was in an area of London he didn't recognise. The graffiti was everywhere; sides of buildings, backs of signs, overhangs. The buildings were tinted with dark grime. Dust stained the windows. He looked down the empty street; tissues and plastic bags rolled across the road and gathered on steps of homes. Tom slowed the tempo of his run to a jog.

As he continued to look at his surroundings, he heard a screeching noise, and an aggressive rev of an engine that started to gain on him. He looked round to see a black van speeding through the streets. It overtook him and skidded to a stop, the back swung around with the sliding door facing Tom. The door slid open and out stepped Smith with a bloody nose and shirt. He pulled out his gun and aimed at Tom, as did the other suited, ebony man.

'Mr. Williams. Stay calm, put your hands up and turn around. If you make a move, we will shoot you,' Smith said, taking cautious steps toward Tom. 'This is Malcolm. He's an agent like me, sent to look after you, he's backup. He's going to cuff you and you're going to come in this van with us and go back to the home now okay?'

Tom didn't answer as he stared at Smith and Malcolm.

*Shit, what can I do now?*

Miller stepped out of the van and folded his arms.

'What have you achieved here, Tom? We want to help you, you're not well,' Malcolm said cautiously.

'I'm not ill.'

Tom looked at Miller's stubborn, wrinkled face as he frowned at Tom's words. His eyes darkened.

'Yes, Tom. You are ill.' Miller said forcefully.

Malcolm approached and lowered his gun.

*Fuck it. Run.*

Tom spotted an alleyway to his left, he sprinted toward it. Smith shot at Tom and continued to shoot at him as he ran.

Tom reached the alleyway and sprinted through the steam and the rat infested dim path and ducked behind a large container. Smith and Malcolm shot the metal container. The bullets travelled through the bin and into the wall around Tom.

*They weren't joking about real fucking bullets.*

'Tom, this is getting ridiculous now, you'll get yourself killed. Just come out with your hands up.' Miller shouted.

Tom leaned against the bin, scrunched down as small as he could make himself. He looked for anywhere to go. If he attempted escape, he would be shot. Located to his left was a door.

*I could try to make that door. If it's locked, I'm screwed. If it's unlocked then maybe, just maybe I can hide out and take them out one by one.*

Tom launched himself off the bin and darted to the door. The gunshots rang through the alleyway and the bullets whistled past Tom, chipping the bricked walls and cracking empty beer bottles on the ground. As he reached the door he used his prosthetic leg to kick it open. The force the leg had was unreal. The door flew open and Tom entered the building. Smith and Malcolm chased after him into the dark.

Tom began to run up countless flights of stairs, leading to rooms that all looked identical. The rooms were big, empty, dark, and smelled horribly dusty. The windows were covered in white plastic that eerily moved in the breeze that entered the cracked plastering.

Tom walked across an open room and found a stairwell. The room had a gaping hole, with stairs leading up from the lower floor to the level he stood on. Tom held his breath as he leaned over to look through a gap between the stairs. He sees Smith and Malcolm, as they exchanged hand signals upon entering the building.

Tom stayed on the level he was on and entered a room under construction. Tools and machines were scattered around the partially demolished room. He walked through the opening in the wall to his right. The next room had a hole in the wooden flooring the size of a beach ball. Tom peered down the hole.

He saw Malcolm pass beneath him. As Malcolm disappeared into darkness, Tom sat on his backside and slid toward gap. He dangled his legs through it. Then he lowered himself into a sinister corridor. He tried to drop silently, but his left leg made a slight thump. Malcolm paused in his steps to listen. Tom carefully stepped to his left, deeper into the shadows, and leaned against the wall.

Malcolm aimed his gun and walked in Tom's direction. As he neared Tom, he slowed. He stopped almost directly in front of Tom. Tom could smell his perspiration and hear him breathing. The floorboards creaked as Malcolm shifted his weight and continued moving slowly forward.

As he crept behind Tom, Tom crouched and leapt straight into Malcolm. Tom connected solidly with his waist and tackled him into the wall. They both fell through it. Malcolm shot wildly into the air.

Malcolm lost grip of his gun; it slid across the floor.

Tom straddled Malcolm's chest and punched him once in the face. As he prepared to hit Malcolm again, Malcolm grabbed him and flipped him easily over his head. Tom landed awkwardly on his shoulder and stayed down. Malcolm strode over and whacked Tom solidly in the face. Tom tried to stand, but Malcolm kicked him in the side and again in the stomach. Tom winced in pain as he lay on the floor. His face rested on the dust carpeted floor; the breeze blew the dust so that it seemed to crawl. Tom watched the dust patterns creep away. His sight was blurred and his mind was blank.

Malcolm picked up his gun. Facing Tom, he put the gun to his face and aimed.

'Tom? Tom where are you? Agents, do not kill him!' shouted Miller from somewhere inside the building.

'I don't give a shit what he wants. You're scum for killing all those women and children,' Malcolm said with a vengeance.

Tom looked in Malcolm's eyes. There was no fear in his eyes.

Tom prepared to be shot. He shut his eyes; as he did, a gunshot went off.

The gunshot echoed throughout the building. Smith paused as he realised the shot was on the floor below. He ran to the main stairs in the centre of the abandoned building and saw Miller running up the stairs, jumping two steps each stride.

They entered the room that Tom and Malcolm were in. Someone was lying on the floor. Smith looked around the room while Miller rushed to the figure. Miller fell to his knees next to the body and struggled to turn it over. As he breathed heavily, he flipped the body, only to see Malcolm's dead eyes staring at him. Tom was gone. 'Mike, get out of here. I'll sort this out.' Smith told Miller.

'Do not kill him. We need him.'

Miller left the room and ran toward the stairs.

Smith stood in the middle of the room, listening, but could hear nothing. Finally, he walked into the darkness.

Miller rushed outside and jumped into the black van. He sat in the driver's seat, pulled out his mobile phone. He reached across the passenger seat to the glove box. He dug around for a bit before pulling out a gun.

Smith wandered stealthily in the darkness. He was shocked when some light was generated from one of the windows. Smith turned to his right to see the bag had been ripped off the window. Smith was startled by the reflection and shot without aiming. He heard something smash.

Smith turned to see a figure running toward him, wearing a black hooded jumper and trousers, wielding a metal bar.

The person swung the bar at Smith's head. He ducked beneath the bar and punched the attacker in the stomach. Smith heard a grunt, and kicked the metal bar from the person's hands, followed by a quick succession of blows to the stomach.

The figure collapsed to the floor, groaning. As Smith prepared to deliver a follow-up kick, he was hit forcefully on the back of his head. Smith was knocked senseless for a moment. He rolled over and saw Tom standing above him with the metal bar.

'Have this you stupid...' Tom was interrupted by the sound of gun shots.

The bullets flew past him. He was so distracted; Smith was able to grab the metal bar.

Tom vigorously attempted to shake Smith's grip, but he forced Tom into a column in the middle of the room. Tom kneed Smith in the balls. Smith shrieked and threw the bar away and grabbed Tom around the throat. He choked Tom, trying his best to choke the very life out of him. Tom tried to shake off Smith's hands and punched his solid stomach.

'Fucking die.' Smith spat at Tom.

Tom was choking; he wheezed in small sips of air.

Smith threw Tom aside as he heard the previous attacker's steel toecap boots scratch the wooden floor. Smith jabbed at the attacker's face; he missed, but the person kicked Smith in the thigh with the steel toe boots.

He regained his balance and he and his attacker began to fight. Tom tried to stand to help his rescuer. The figure's hood was thrown back, revealing a dark-skinned girl whose hair was tied up. Tom gasped in shock.

*Danni!*

Danni looked at Tom's shocked expression. While distracted, she was hit on the side of her face. The skin on her face shook, ripples formed on her cheeks. She concentrated again on fighting Smith. They countered one another's moves.

Tom rolled forward and pushed himself off the ground. As he rose, a woman appeared from behind the pillar and pointed a gun in Tom's face.

'Stay here or I'll shoot you.'

Tom recognised the voice.

'Lucy. Why are you doing this? Help me. Me, you and Danni can...'

'Shut up right now. .' Lucy shouted.

A gunshot rang through the empty room. Tom's eardrums vibrated. Tom rapidly turned to look at Danni and Smith. Danni was on the ground with Smith pointing a gun at her. His eye looked sheltered within his swollen face, but his self-righteous smirk still managed to show through all the blood.

'That is enough. Enough damage has been caused here, Tom. Now come with me.' Miller roared as he walked up to Tom, brandishing his gun threateningly.

Tom was roughly grabbed from behind. His arms were held tightly, and he was kicked in the backs of his knees, forcing him to kneel down. He looked up to see the Smith's stubbled chin. Miller stood in front of Tom and pulled out a syringe. He squirted some liquid out and then stuck it forcefully into Tom's neck.

Tom helplessly looked to Lucy; she leaned against the pillar with her arms folded, holding her sides. Tom fell onto his back and moved to lie on his side. He looked at Danni's body.

*She can't be dead, there's no blood. I don't think Smith shot her, Miller must have shot in the air.*

Tom's thoughts came to an end as he fell asleep.

Lucy dragged the Danni's body, while and Smith carried Tom over his shoulder.

## **14**

Tom awakened once again in the white room. As he opened his eyes, Miller and Smith stood at the end of his bed talking to each other under their breaths.

Tom tried to move his hands to rub his heavy eyelids. As he did, his hands stayed tied to the metal bars on either side of his bed. He could see that his hands were tied with plastic cable ties to the bed.

Miller and Smith's heads turned simultaneously as they heard Tom's bed scrape and shuffle.

'You have done enough. Stay there and be quiet,' Miller said.

'We should have killed him,' Smith said.

'Where's Danni?' Tom asked.

'Tom. You need to understand that you are not well. Neither is Danni. You need to stay away from her. Danni is here and she's safe. She escaped from here and we had been looking for her for a while. So it's good that she tried to help you escape, we were able to bring her here, as well as you.' Miller leaned in as he spoke to Tom.

'I'm not ill. You are lying to me, I don't know what to believe anymore, I don't believe I'm ill and I don't believe Anna is still alive and I know I don't have a child.'

'So what do you believe then? That some flying objects tried to kill you? That you killed your father in a building full of his experiments? That all of London was destroyed?'

Tom paused as he stared into Miller's black eyes. His eyes seemed darker than usual and very bloodshot.

'I believe that you are a sick man who's ruined my life.'

'Smith, could you leave the room please.' Miller sternly said to Smith.

Smith left the room, slamming the door behind him.

'Look Tom, I'm trying to help you and have been helping you for some time. I will give you an ultimatum here. I will let you go right now if you want to, but you'll be killed. You need to realise you killed children and mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters. You will not be safe out there; and with your mind the way it is, you might cause damage to people. You do not realise, but you are mentally ill and you don't know it.' Miller reached for a pair of scissors as he continued to speak. 'So I'll let you free and let you decide, Tom.'

He cut the cable tie on either wrist and began to walk away.

'It's your choice now. Do what you...'

Miller's voice became soft as he tried to continue speaking.

Tom clenched Miller's throat. He forced him against the wall and held him by his jacket.

'Tell me the truth right now or I'll kill you.' Tom spat in Miller's face as he spoke.

'I am telling you Tom.' Miller attempted to catch his breath and whispered quietly, 'Please don't do this.'

Tom continued to squeeze Miller's neck. He stared into Miller's desperate and frightened eyes. His black eyes looked small, more bloodshot than usual. His face became pale and he drooped to the side. Tom let go and Miller thumped onto the ground. Tom looked down at Miller's body. It looked shrivelled and bleak. He tucked his head into his arms protect it. Tom kicked him in the stomach. Miller groaned and wriggled around on the floor.

Tom spotted Miller's handgun strapped to his belt. He unclipped the gun and checked to see if it was loaded. It had a full round of real bullets.

*I've never held or shot a gun. It can't be too hard to grasp.*

Tom walked to the door.

He leaned on the door, the door groaned as it opened. Tom moved his head out of the room. He looked up and down the corridor. No one was in sight. He walked warily into the shadowy corridor; a light flickered to his left. It was so very dark in the other direction. He decided to go right; he walked down the corridor with his gun aimed in front of him. His finger was pressed tightly on the trigger.

As Tom entered the darkness, he heard somebody behind him. He turned. There was no one in sight. He continued to walk down the dark corridor until he heard another sound behind him. He whirled about to see a woman standing in the corridor, blood dripping from her fingertips. Her black hair covered her face. Her arms hung down by her sides; her head tilted up, her neck popping repeatedly with each slight increment. Her hair dropped behind her face and into place to the sides of her head. It was Anna. Her eyes were almost non-existent now, just black slits. Her skin was dark and blotchy, her veins black and created a roadmap on her skin. Tom looked at her neck and saw bloody hand marks.

He paused in disbelief. He closed his eyes and slowly opened them again.

*I've been thinking of her dead like this for a long time. They have been dreams. This is not one of my dreams. This is real.*

Tom continued to stare at Anna, until two men appeared from around the corner and grabbed her. She pushed them off violently and the two men struggled to control her. One grabbed her legs and the other grabbed her shoulders and they threw her roughly to the ground. One shocked her with a stun gun. Her body jolted three times before she finally became unconscious. They snatched her up and carried her away.

Tom ran to the opposite end of the corridor and stood with his back to the wall. He leaned carefully around the corner to see where the men took Anna. As he snuck his peek, a bright

light shone in his eyes. Tom quickly straightened up and held his gun, preparing to shoot. He looked again.

He can see that at the end of the corridor was a glass door with a silver frame, leading to a room that shed a bright light. It appeared to be a laboratory.

A man and a woman in white coats walked around the room.

*I recognise that woman from somewhere.*

Tom heard a door click open or shut, he looked back toward the direction of his hospital room; there was still no sign of Miller. Tom ran to the end of the corridor. He grasped the handle to the door of the lab, trying to keep himself in the shadows. He turned the handle and walked into the room.

As he entered, he saw TV screens in front of him and somebody slouched in a seat in front of the screens.

The room was dark with red and green lights flickering all around the room, with TV monitors and what appeared to be sound systems as well.

As Tom continued to soundlessly approach the person in the chair, he noticed a CD with "Endurance Test" written on the top in thick black letters.

Tom walked behind the figure and looked down at him. He was asleep, and wore black trousers and shirt with a badge that said "security."

Tom held the gun to the back of the man's head, his finger hovering above the trigger. His decision made, he pulled the trigger. A loud bang vibrated throughout the room. Blood and fragments of brain splattered on the small TV screens. Part of the man's head was gone. Tom looked at the body slouched in the chair. Blood was all over the gun, Tom's hands and on his white suit.

Tom stepped away from the body. He looked at the CCTV screens. He saw his room. Miller was no longer on the floor or in the room. Tom quickly looked at all the screens trying to find Miller. He saw corridors, other rooms with people lying in beds, labs. With no sign of Miller on CCTV, Tom walked to the CD titled "Endurance Test" and picked it up. He looked around the room for a CD player and a TV. As he glanced around the dreary room, he spotted an opening. He strode over to find a smaller room with a tape, CD, DVD and video player with a TV.

Tom entered the room and shut the door. As he closed the door, keys jangled in the key hole. He quietly locked the door and turned to examine the equipment.

Tom pressed a button which said "power on" and the player turned on with a message, "Welcome." Tom pressed the eject button and a slot opened for the CD. Tom laid the CD on the dish and pressed the eject button again and the tray closed. The machine made a whining and chugging sound, the TV changed channels and the CD began to play.

Ken Williams was the first person shown on the film. He began to talk to the camera.

'I am Doctor Kenneth Williams and I am currently working on a project to experiment with a drug that has failed to cure cancer but has caused major side effects on humans to turn them

into an aggressive wreck.'

*I knew I was fucking right. Miller was a liar. I don't have a kid, Anna is dead or at least I think she is. Lucy is in on this. Stuart is dead and Dan most likely is. Now I know the truth.*

'This footage you are about to observe is a series of recordings of the experiment I decided to implement using human participants. The aim of the Endurance test is to examine what humans are capable of doing in order to survive. This test will allow us to identify, by using futuristic equipment, the side effects of the drug.

On this CD, you will see a number of names. These names relate to particular recordings from the experiment, involving the subjects placed in the experiment. But first I need to explain what you are about to see.' Ken paused, took a deep breath and looked straight into the camera. 'My team and I built a complex replica of London. It's realistic and is identical to London. We used open land to construct this masterpiece. We built it to scale of a small area of London; from Waterloo to Leicester Square. We felt the participants would stay within this area because it's one of the most populated parts of London. We considered the locations and built what we needed, including the undergrounds and railways.

Within the replica, we allowed the army to use their battle hovercrafts to test the capabilities of their machines. They were used to kill the infected and test the ability of the participants' wills to survive.

The subjects were chosen randomly, with the exception of my son, and his friends. To obtain our participants, we tracked them until they were in their homes, where they were drugged and transported to our replica. They awoke without knowing that they were, in fact, in false replicas of their homes.

If anyone was able to find a way to the end of the replica walls, they were executed. We decided to focus our attention on my son, Thomas Williams.

He and his girlfriend Anna Reid, were the first exposed to the experiment. They were to spend their five year anniversary in this London replica and we planned to film their activities. Although this may seem diabolical, it isn't. This is an experiment testing many aspects of human life and will benefit our future.

This replica allows us to have control of the weather, but not who lives and who dies.

I would like to quickly name some of the scientists to thank for this experiment; my wife Sarah Williams, Doctor Michael Miller and Doctor Vidolski.

A menu will now appear to make your selection of which participant you would like to observe.'

A menu appeared on the TV screen; the first name is "Thomas Williams", followed by many others including "Anna Reid, Kenneth Williams, Lucy Allan, Dan Maguire, Stewart Lake, Danni and Graham Taint."

Tom stared at the screen in disbelief.

*How can they make this seem like a movie?*



Tom used the remote to hover above his own name on the screen and finally selected it. Ken returned to the screen, looking into the camera.

‘You have chosen my son Thomas Williams. Just to give you some background information. My wife Sarah, and I, have been experimenting on Tom for a long time. Nothing too serious at first, just testing his reactions and how certain choices affect brain patterns and then affect his life and future choices, etc.

I decided to let Tom grow up thinking his mother, Sarah Williams had died of cancer when the two of us were away. Of course she didn’t, but we had to take drastic actions to get our work underway, and Sarah wanted to begin on the experiment, Endurance. Later, I let Tom believe I was murdered in a mystery shooting.

So while I and Sarah were out of Tom’s life, it allowed us to watch him and prepare our experiments, to prepare the replica, the drugs and, of course, test Tom’s mental strength.

This experiment is to show what humans can endure. Thomas is the main subject here and I believe he will survive the chaos that he will be presented with. Some of the scenes that you will watch on this footage are graphic and will be distressing.’

Tom watched the TV screen change to CCTV footage of him waking up in his bed. Tom fast forwarded the CD by chapters. He skipped to himself walking in Anna’s flat, and watched himself pacing up and down in her room, waiting for her to change. He then skipped to them eating, then to himself in the restroom of the restaurant, then to the cinema, then to him kneeling down in front of her preparing to propose. Tom watched the catastrophe unfold. The car ran over Anna at some speed and snatched her away from Tom. Tom fast forwarded slightly to the explosion. He watched the hovercraft above the group of people who came out to help Tom. He watched as it sent small explosions and bullets along the ground and onto buildings. The camera shook and was destroyed. The view changed to one showing the entire location covered in flames.

Tom’s viewing stopped as he heard someone unlock the door and enter the room. He held his gun, paused the footage, and turned quickly to see Lucy standing at the door.

‘Have you watched it then?’ Lucy said.

‘Yes, I fucking have. Why didn’t you help me? Me, you and Danni could have overpowered them in here.’

‘Tom, they threatened to kill me and my family if I said anything to you. I had to play along, I’m so sorry.’ Lucy began to cry. ‘I am truly sorry.’

‘Were you part of this film, or were you helping them all the time?’

‘I was part of it for a day, then they took me out because I reached the wall of the replica. The hovercrafts were going to kill me, but they didn’t. They must have had plans for all this to happen. They must have known I’m a trained nurse, and that I could help them with the infected.’

‘Did you watch me?’

‘Yes.’ Lucy paused as she stared at Tom’s scarred face. ‘I did, day and night.’

'Did you want me to survive?'

'Yes. Of course I did, Tom.'

'So you wanted me to survive. You wanted me to come back as a disabled man for the rest of my life. You wanted this experience to fucking scar my whole entire body?'

'Tom, no, I didn't know that was going to happen. None of us did. I wanted you to survive because you mean so much to me and...'

'Who spoke to me on the radio then? When I went to my house, I found the radio and got frequency, who was saying that it was the government's doing and London was shut for refurbishments?'

Lucy paused as she looked at Tom's face. His enflamed skin covered his left eye and the rest of his face was covered in severe burn scars. 'I knew the signal had to be intercepted. You caused a lot of panic. As they intercepted the signal, you spoke to Miller. It was Miller who you spoke to on the radio and he lied to you.'

*It was all scripted. So much thorough work and years of planning.*

'We need to get out of here. Where's Danni?'

'She's in the lab. Tom, there's something I need to tell you and you need to believe me. This drug they're using. It gives people adrenalin and seems to keep people alive. It seems to revive their hearts. Anna was dead, but when the drug was injected into her, she came back to life after a while.'

'I know. I saw her in the corridor earlier.'

'Also, Dan is here in the lab too, and Stewart. But they're both dying. They aren't as strong as Anna. They were going to bring Ken back, but they couldn't find his body.'

'So how was Anna not killed in the explosion?'

'The body hanging upside down wasn't Anna. That was her twin sister Anna never met.'

'What? Anna knew her family well.'

'They were separated at birth. All her family were involved in this experiment and they all died. We don't have time for this. Danni escaped once, but now she's been tied down and locked in a testing room in the lab. I went to her room and loosened the locks on her wrists so she should be able to get out, the only problem is I don't know how long it'll take for her to escape this time.'

As Lucy finished her sentence, a deafening siren began to sound.

'That must be her now. Come on let's go.' Lucy grabbed Tom's hand but Tom pulled away.

'Lucy, no offence but I don't trust you. Let's just get out of here and we'll talk properly.'

Lucy nodded and exited the room. As she did, a gun was pointed at her head. Tom paused in his spot, as did Lucy. They stood waiting, someone pulled the trigger. Lucy's head exploded, her brains splattered on the wall behind her. Her body hit the floor.

Smith walked through door and pointed his gun at Tom.

'Get on the fucking floor,' Smith shouted.

Tom put his hands up and slowly knelt on the ground. Smith walked up to him and knocked Tom over the head with his gun. Blackness prevailed.

## **15**

Danni hid behind the bed she was tied to. She looked up as a man in a white gown shot at her. The bullets sparked off the metal framing of the bed; the mattress was covered in bullet holes.

Danni was trapped. She looked to her left and right and saw only white walls. There was nothing to use as a weapon. Danni looked under her bed and noticed the wheels of the bed were locked; she saw the lever within her reach. She unlocked the wheels and moved the bed, lining it up with the man in the doorway. She charged at him, pushing the bed as hard as she could into him. He shot wildly. The bed forced him out of the small room and into the main lab.

As he smashed into a work unit, glass beakers smashed and the liquid contained within burned his skin. He squealed in pain. The liquids spurted onto the floor and created a misty haze.

The scientists in the lab looked around alertly. In fear, one of the scientists ran to the wall and pressed a red button setting off a deafening siren.

Danni crouched behind a unit and watched as the scientists exited the lab, except for a middle-aged woman, who put a mask over her mouth and pulled out an automatic gun. Danni looked at the unit to her left and took one of the gas masks and put it over her face.

The scientist who had been pushed into the liquid had completely changed. His veins turned aggressive, his skin looked sore, the inside of his mouth turned from normal to dead and black.

Danni looked up from behind the counter; both the woman and Miller shot at her. She decided to sneak along the line of worktops. As Danni crawled along the floor, she opened drawers built into the worktops looking for a weapon of some sort. As she opened drawers, glass beakers smashed and scattered on the floor and onto Danni. The desktops' surface was scuffed and carved from each bullet fired at Danni.

She opened a drawer and found a handgun. She grabbed the gun, jumped up and shot at the woman. The woman ducked down and Miller shot at Danni, hitting only the worktop and the liquids on it.

'Get out of here Miller. Get to Tom, we can't let him escape.' The woman shouted to Miller.

'Okay. Sarah, Kill her.' Miller shouted back.

'Just go get my son.' Sarah bellowed.

Miller made a run for the door. Danni tried to stop him; she jumped up to shoot him. Miller shot back and Sarah shot, her bullet skimmed Danni's arm and peeled her skin. Danni let out a cry and ducked back down.

Miller got to the door and left the room. The door locked and the lights began to flicker.

Danni counted the bullets in the gun. She had two left. She looked at her arm as blood trickled out of the wound.

As Danni moved along the worktop, she saw three people banging on the glass. The pupils in their eyes were red and their skin was dark and dingy. Blood covered most of their bodies.

Danni looked above the worktop; and Sarah shot at her. This time, she didn't stop shooting. She smashed all the glass beakers containing liquids. The glass shattered and fragments of glass spread across the room. The liquid clung to the specks of glass and splattered onto the floor.

Sarah's gun clicked. It was finally empty. Danni jumped, shot once and missed, hitting the glass wall behind her. She shot again and hit Sarah's shoulder. Sarah screamed in pain and collapsed onto the floor.

Danni threw her empty gun on the floor and looked around. The flickering lights chillingly assisted the infected. As the infected charged into the room, they ran straight to Danni. Each time the lights flickered, the infected eerily came closer to Danni. Their red eyes were filled with anger and their bodies slouched.

Danni prepared to fight a medium built male, whose name tag read Dan Maguire. She was distracted when she was grabbed from behind and thrown onto the desk face-first. The smashed glass grated her cheeks. She was then thrown into the glass wall head first, making her dizzy.

As she looked up from the ground, the flickering light showed the scientist she pushed into the worktop using the bed, looking down at her. His skin was black and his eyes were bloody red. Blood dripped from his eyes. The veins on his face were black. He smiled at her, revealing his yellow stubbed teeth.

Suddenly, bullet holes appeared in his chest and he fell against the glass wall and slid onto the ground. Danni pulled herself off the ground to see Sarah shooting all the infected.

Each shot created enough light to see her wrinkled face and dry grey hair. Her shrivelled lips were clenched together tightly. Her top teeth were biting her bottom lip, and her thin veined arms held a handgun, firing at the infected.

Danni looked at the scientist's dead body. She leaned over and stole his swipe card from his outside pocket where it displayed his identification. She looked at the door and looked back at Sarah who was surrounded by the infected.

As Danni turned to run, she was stopped by Anna who stood in front of her. She didn't look like the other infected. Her skin was loose, it hung off her arm revealing bone. Her cheek was missing, revealing her dried up, black tongue and yellow and black-stubbed teeth. Anna showed no emotion and grabbed Danni by the neck. She clenched her neck tightly. Her bony fingers dug into Danni's skin. Blood trickled out of her neck. Danni forced Anna's hands off her neck and threw her onto the worktop and continued to run for the door.

As she reached the door, she swiped the card and the door opened.

'You can't leave me.' Sarah shrieked at Danni. 'Help me.'

Danni looked at Sarah who held two handguns. Danni hesitated, but walked out the door. She let the door slide shut and watched as Sarah turned and continued screaming and shouting at Danni. Only her mouth moved. Danni could hear the muffled gunshots coming from the room.

## **16**

'Drop the gun and leave Tom on the ground.' Miller bellowed at Smith.

'He's scum; we need to kill him now.'

'He's the experiment, which is ongoing. You're ruining it. It wasn't in the script to tie him to a chair and punch and kick the shit out of him, was it? Let me put his leg back on. We need to get out of here, we are all infected.'

'What do you mean?'

'His girlfriend decided to break out of her room and cause mayhem in the lab. All the liquids have been destroyed. This is going to go airborne.'

'Shit.'

Smith lowered his gun and walked away from Tom's severely beaten body. Tom lay sprawled on the ground. A wooden chair had been shattered on the ground next to him. His prosthetic leg was on the table and his face was swollen and bloody.

Miller took Tom's leg and began to reattach it to his thigh.

'What the fuck are we going to do if it's gone airborne?' Smith asked anxiously.

'It has gone airborne. I will have to make multiples of the cure.'

'I thought you said the cure doesn't work?'

'It does for some people. For the people it doesn't cure, I don't know, they'll just have to be killed.'

Miller pulled Tom up from the ground. Tom wearily stood, swaying on his feet. Smith pulled his gun and aimed at Tom's head.

'Fuck sake, Smith. Drop the gun.'

'This experiment is fucked up. It's failed. This isn't the London replica anymore and definitely isn't just an Endurance test. It finishes her, Mike.'

Miller pulled his gun and aimed it at Smith. He bellowed, 'Drop it!'

Smith's finger rested on the trigger. His hand began to shake, his eyes tightened and his eyebrows lowered. Miller pulled the trigger and shot Smith in the head. Smith fell, shooting once into the ceiling.

Danni stood in the doorway. Tom looked at her with relief. Miller pointed his gun at her.

'Stay there. You've done enough. It's gone airborne so we need to work together to make this work.'

Danni entered the room.

'Stay there!' Miller yelled.

Danni continued to walk and Miller's finger rested on the trigger. As his finger tightened, Tom attacked Miller and forced him onto a table.

Tom grabbed the gun and threw it in Danni's direction. Danni picked it up and looked at the bullets.

'You need me.' Miller said to Tom.

'No, we don't.'

Tom released his grip on Miller and walked toward Danni. Miller launched himself off the table and pulled out two syringes with liquid inside. Miller alternately stuck the syringes in either side of Tom's neck and injected the liquid. Tom paused pulled the syringes out of his neck. Miller stumbled back and fell onto the desk with the CCTV footages playing.

'What did you just inject into him?' Danni growled at Miller.

'You need me now, don't you? He'll die if you kill me.'

'What is it?'

'It's the virus.'

'I'm immune to it. My dad was too.' Tom smugly said.

'This is my creation. It's far worse than his. I used it on myself and Anna Reid. I think you know who that is.'

Tom screamed at Miller, and then clutched his head. Tom's pupils overtook his eyes, turning them completely black. He shoved Danni away and ran toward Miller. He grabbed Miller and smashed his face into the table multiple times. Danni ran to Tom.

'Tom, stop. We need him to cure you and try to stop the disease.'

Tom threw Miller away and he landed on the ground face first. Miller wearily got off the ground and felt his bloody face.

'Well, now you've had your little tantrum, can we try to save everyone?'

Tom looked into Danni's eyes. Danni looked into Tom's pitch black eyes. Tom's eyes now looked similar to Miller's eyes.

'Tom, we need to save you and try to stop everyone in the world from getting the virus.'

Tom grunted.

'So what do we do now?' Danni asked Miller.

'I need to get to the lab. We need to tie him down and get some of the cure into him. We need to kill every infected person inside the lab; then, I need time to warn the authorities of the situation.'

Miller rushed from the room. Danni and Tom followed closely behind.

## 17

Sarah was still shooting at the infected. With only three left, she shot one more and the gun clicked on empty. As she pulled the trigger again, it still didn't shoot. She looked down at the gun, and checked the chamber. It was empty. Horrified, she threw the gun at one of her attackers and began to scream. The mask over her mouth muffled her screams and pleas.

Miller walked into the lab with Tom gripping Miller's shoulder. They paused, assessed the situation, and allowed Danni to enter first so she could take care of the attackers.

Sarah ran to the door, attempting to escape, but she was grabbed by one of the infected. It was Anna. She pushed Sarah onto the work surface face-first into the liquid form of the virus.

Miller and Danni ignored the chaos to lay Tom on a bed. They secured him with handcuffs attached to the sides of the bed. They cuffed his wrists and Miller ran to the computers to his right. The room was surrounded by blood-stained glass, providing them a view of the lab.

There was a bed with some liquids in beakers on a table and a computer next to it.

'Go out there and help Sarah. The infected cannot come in here.'

'Who's Sarah? Why's she so important?'

Miller pointed to Tom, 'It's his mum.'

Tom turned his head and tried to arch his neck to see Sarah in the other room.

'Tom, lie down, you need to try to relax.' Miller said forcefully, while pushing his head back down onto the table.

Danni ran back into the other room to see the shot infected coming back to life. Although covered in bullet holes, they pulled themselves off the ground slowly but steadily and renewed their attack on Sarah.

Anna threw Sarah across a worktop; Sarah landed on the other side and stayed on the ground.

Danni pulled out her handgun, and aimed at Anna. As her finger clutched the trigger, she was forced on the floor. Landing on her side, she lost grip of her gun, it slid across the floor away from her. She moved to lay on her back and looked up to her father's dark face. His pupils were black and surrounded by red, bloodshot eyes. The skin on his face looked peeled, revealing the tender, red skin beneath.

Danni put her feet on his chest and kicked him away. He stumbled and fell on his back. Danni got back up to see Anna stamping on Sarah. Danni jumped on the work surface and dove toward Anna. She fell on her. Anna's back bent over the counter; her spine cracked .

'Code red! The experiment has gone wrong. Warn all authorities and tell the prime minister.' Miller placed the phone back on its stand.

'So, I don't have a kid?' Tom asked Miller wearily.

'No, you don't.'

'Why do it, then?'

'It wasn't to be spiteful; I did it because it was an experiment. The second part, whether the human brain can endure such trauma and recover.'

'Do you think I can have a normal life from this now?'

Miller ignored Tom's questions and continued to tap on his keypad, staring at the computer and placing the test tubes in a machine.

'I've learnt how to kill innocent people. You caught me on footage killing innocent people who wanted me to kill them because they were suffering. Anna has haunted me, the people I've killed have haunted me, and now I find out that not only my dad was in this, and was twisted, my mum is as well.'

'I am sorry, Tom. I'm sorry it had to be you. I do feel sorry for you, I really do.'

Miller put the liquids into a syringe and walked to Tom. He tapped the needle and injected it into Tom's dark vein in his neck. Tom winced at the pain as Miller injected.

'Why did you have to tie me down for that?'

'In case it doesn't work. It could aggravate the virus and I'd have to kill you.'

Danni got off the ground and looked at Anna. She stood up and threw herself at Danni. The force of Anna's run pushed Danni into the glass wall. Anna grabbed Danni's neck and held tightly. Her sharp, skinless fingers pierced the skin of Danni's neck. As Danni gasped for air, her vision darkened. She weakened; she stared at Anna's dark, revolting face. Half her face was shrunken and the other half revealed the inside of her mouth which was black, covered with white specks of mould.

Anna's head collapsed and she lost her grip on Danni. Sarah stood in Anna's place holding a metal stand and stamped on Anna's head, cracking her skull. She lifted her leg, revealing her bloody shoe with pieces of brain clinging to it.

Danni stood up straight and looked at Sarah's old, withered face which is covered in cuts and bruises.

'Thank you,' she said.

Sarah nodded at her and looked toward the glass door.

'Can I go in there and see my son?' Sarah asked.

'Errrm.' Danni looked into Sarah's eyes that watered a little at the sound of doubt in Danni's voice.

'Please,' Sarah whispered.

'I'm sure it should be okay. We'll lock the door in the lab, which should hold them off.'

Danni and Sarah both entered the room with Miller holding down Tom's head.



'What's going on?' Sarah shouted at Miller.

'He's having a seizure. He'll be fine any minute.' Miller's voice strained as he used his bony arms to hold Tom's head in place.

Sarah ran to Miller's desk where the computer sat. She grabbed a syringe and injected two liquids into the syringe. She shook the syringe and walked quickly back to Tom. She injected the syringes into Tom's neck and pulled Miller away.

Tom continued to seize, his head moving side to side, shaking the bed. Saliva pooled on his lips and dribbled down his chin. His arms tensed, his veins became darker and thicker. His back arched and he stuck his chest out and paused in that position. Miller walked over to the bed. He stood beside it staring, at Tom. As he placed two fingers on Tom's neck, his eyes opened and one arm broke free of the leather cuffs on his right hand and he grabbed Miller's neck. Tom's hand tightened and Miller's eyes closed. Danni ran to Miller and tried to pull him away. Tom's hand tightened more and more.

Tom looked at Danni. His eyes were a dark red and blood dribbled from the corners of his eyes. His head was covered in purple veins. Suddenly, Tom's eyes shut and he let go of Miller's neck, Miller collapsed to the ground.

Miller squirmed on the ground, breathing heavily. Danni pulled him up and sat him in a chair at the desk. She looked at Tom who was now unconscious. The veins on his head were gone. The spittle on his lips disappeared, but blood still stained his lower eyelids.

'Is he going to be okay?' Danni asked Miller and Sarah.

'I think so.' Sarah said.

Miller sat up straight and pushed himself out of the chair.

'This shows how far we've come. This experiment was not a failure.' Miller said.

'You created this virus, it's only right that you make a cure. You've ruined lots of lives, especially Tom's.' Danni sternly replied.

Danni looked at Tom and held his limp hand. His eyes opened, his pupils shrank. He sat up hard and fast and took a deep breath. He looked around at his surroundings and at Sarah in confusion. He looked at Danni, and grinned and attempted to hug her. As he did, he jerked violently to one side. His right hand was still cuffed to the bed. Tom and Danni both laughed.

'Let me get that for you.'

Danni walked around the bed and un-cuffed his wrist. Tom wrapped his arms around Danni; she returned the hug.

Sarah looked at the ground and Miller stood next to Sarah.

'The cure worked.' Miller began to laugh. 'It really works.'

'We need to get out of here now.' Sarah told Danni and Tom.

'Yes, we need to go to the authorities and help them stop the virus from spreading.' Miller told Tom.

'I'm not helping either of you.' Tom shouted at Miller and Sarah.

Tom released his grip on Danni and gently moved her aside. He jumped off his bed and walked up to Miller and Sarah.

'You've ruined my life, both of you and you are not my mother, you're dead to me.' Tom stared at Sarah, full of anger and rage. 'I don't want you to find me after this; I don't want any communication with you.' Tom turned around and walked to the doorway. 'And you...' Tom pointed to Miller. 'If you try to start another experiment with these drugs, I will personally come and find you and I will kill you.'

Miller and Sarah both stood silently and stared at Tom. Sarah had tears dripping down her cheeks and as she opened her mouth to speak. Tom interrupted.

'Shut up. I don't give a shit what you think or have to say. You're dead to me and so is Dad, I made sure he was. Come on, Danni let's go.'

Danni walked to Tom, staring at Miller and Sarah. As she reached Tom, he smiled at her.

'Go out the fire exit, Tom, you might not want to go back out there.' Miller said.

Tom nodded to Miller. 'You better stop this virus because I cannot deal with all that again.'

'Don't worry, we will do our best.'

Tom and Danni stood at the emergency exit in the lab and pushed the double doors open. The red light above the door turned on and swivelled. Danni walked out the door; Tom stood in the doorway looking into the room. He looked at Miller and Sarah's faces as they watched him leave. The red light turned the room red and Miller's and Sarah's faces a pale red.

'You're lucky I haven't killed you two.' Sarah and Miller continued to stare and kept quiet.

'Good luck.' Tom said as he left the lab.

## **18**

*I sit here in my house, the same house where I used to live. It's such a relief to know that all that happened wasn't real, well the destruction of London.*

*Me and Danni live here together, her family occasionally come over to see her. Her family being Mum Lynne, sister Sadie and Sadie's little boy Jerome. They feel like my new family too. I think me being in their family feels like the family is once again complete since Graham died.*

*I've got a new job too. I'm a manager of an ICT company where we fix and build computers. Me and my assistant Trev, buy the parts cheap and then build some cool computers. It's not the dream job I want but it gets the money for me and Danni. Danni also works for me, I trained her up and she's one of the best people I have.*

*The virus hasn't spread. I mean, there is news every now and then about the outbreak and saying there is a lot of people infected, but they are being cured when found. They say millions are infected and will change slowly but you know what the media are like. Miller is on the TV a lot, speaking about the cure and that he is getting the support he needs to prevent an outbreak. He also released a book revealing the dark side of the Endurance experiment. He*

*went to court for hundreds of charges and was found not guilty. I suppose you can be found not guilty if you have the government on your side. There have been assassination attempts on Miller, but we do need him to help stop the virus from spreading.*

*I do not know where or if Mum is even alive. But I simply don't care because she's been dead to me for years.*

*I never ever thought I'd have a normal life again but I do. Except... sometimes... I see her. When I lie in bed I sometimes see her standing in front of the wardrobe staring at me. Or when I'm driving to work, she's sitting on the back seat staring at me in the mirror. Even when I sleep, I dream about her. I dream about what we used to be like and then I dream of that night when she was killed, the impact, the sound of the tyres and then her body, knotted and twisted. I still see her body sometimes in random places, the cracking of her bones as she clicks her broken neck, her shattered arms and legs always rings through my ears. I make out to Danni that I can't see Anna. Deep down she must know I do.*

*I can't cope with it anymore. I can't move on from her and the trauma is too much. Everyday is hard. It wears me down.*

*So I sit here in my house, in the sitting room, writing a suicidal note to Danni. A chair is in front of me, a rope is tied to the ceiling where the light and fan used to be.*

*I've been here before. A month ago, I couldn't go through with it, I had a rope ready. I've even stuck a gun down my throat but now seems the right time.*

*I don't have any real family, but I think that Danni and her family can cope. They'll pull through this, Danni will meet a new guy and then they'll be happy.*

Tom stood from his chair; he picked up a photo from the arm of the chair and stood on the wooden chair below the rope. He put his neck into the noose he's tied. He raised the photo to his face and looked at the photo of him and Anna sitting in a restaurant together. She's sitting on his lap and they're both smiling. One of his tears fell onto the photo. Tom pulled the photo away from his face.

As he stared through the window onto the street where he lived, he kicked the wooden chair from under his feet. The noose tightened; his weight travelled downward but doesn't reach the ground. As Tom struggled and kicked his legs, the rope dug into his neck, it tightened as he struggled. His vision blurred. He looked ahead to see Anna standing in front of the window, where the sun beams into the room. He heard the front door unlock and open.

'Hello.' Danni shouted.

She closed the door, placed her keys on the table next to the phone in the hallway and walked slowly toward the sitting room door. Her hand clutched the golden door handle on the door leading to the sitting room. The shining handle created a mirror image of Danni's hand and caught her attention. She began to slowly open the door. She opened it halfway to see if the TV was on. The TV was off and so was the Sky box underneath the TV. She then let go of the handle and wandered to the kitchen, dragging her feet.

'Tom, where are you babe?' Danni shouted, while unpacking her shopping in the kitchen.

*Here I am, looking out the window onto the street. The sun is smothered by the clouds, the birds' tweets silent; the car noises from a distance are silent and the vibrating bass from music playing from houses, cars and passing pedestrians' speakers have disappeared.*

*This is the most silent it has ever been while living here.*

The silence is interrupted by a piercing scream from Danni. Danni ran to Tom's body, grappled with his legs and lifted him up. Her arms shook and tears drenched her face. She grabbed the wooden chair and stood on it; she untied the rope, releasing Tom to the ground. His legs buckled and his head smashed onto the carpet.

'Tom, can you hear me?'

Danni pulled out her mobile phone and dialed 999.

*I look down to my lifeless body. I feel different. I'm floating. Danni looks traumatised and she shakes as she holds my body in her arms. She's called the ambulance but by the time they get here, I'll be long gone. A waiting time of approximately five minutes or longer, they might as well not bother.*

Danni lay Tom on the ground and began to push down on his chest, whispering,

'One, two, three, four.'

Opening his mouth and blowing into his mouth. She repeated the same actions four times before she looked down at Tom and rested her head on his chest and began to scream.

*I regret putting Danni through this but I couldn't cope with it all.*

*I'm floating further and further away. My vision blurs, my surroundings are white and glowing. I'm not in the world anymore. I'm free.*

## **19**

Miller sat in his sitting room in his four bedroom house. He held The Guardian newspaper reading the article on Thomas Williams committing suicide.

The story was out that Tom was the main subject of the Endurance experiment and Miller was fully exposed by Danni. She gave them the book from Tom, who wrote down everything that happened to him in detail and titled the book 'Endurance'. The book was published and the papers released stories about it.

Miller was interrupted by a knock at the door. He threw the papers to his left onto the floor and walked towards the door. He walked across his sitting room, through the dining room and into the hallway to the door. As he does, he saw Danni standing there.

'What are you doing here?' Miller asked.

'Get in now.' Danni screamed at him and pulled out a handgun with a silencer attached to it.

She pushed him into the house and shut the door behind her. She stood in front of the door and pointed the gun at him. He put his hands up.

'What the fuck are you doing?'

'Shut up. Tom's dead.'

'Yes. He killed himself.'

'You don't even care? It was your fault.' Danni snarled.

She shot his ankle; he screamed in pain, collapsing to the ground and holding his leg.

'You silly bitch, if you kill me, everyone will die. Tom even made the plea to everyone in his book. You need me.'

'We don't need you. They have everything they need to stop it from becoming a global problem. Don't be so full of yourself. You are a lonely man, no one will even care if you die and you're a waste of space. You killed Tom you asshole.'

'I didn't kill him; his parents did that. Get out of my house.'

Danni looked at Miller's smug face. She lifted her gun, aiming at Miller; she shot him twice in the chest. His white shirt soaked up the blood; it spread across his shirt and stuck to his black tie. He fell to the ground and lay on his back. He looked at his chest and covered the bullet wounds. Danni walked up to him and pointed her gun to one of the bullet holes, he squealed.

'We don't need you.' Danni whispered.

She pulled out a syringe from her pocket and injected it into his neck.

'What's that?' Miller asked warily.

'Just some of the virus to keep you alive a bit longer, you won't change or anything but you'll be alive for a few hours.'

Danni stood and walked to the door; she looked back at Miller, who began to crawl to the phone on the table side. Danni shot the phone and it smashed across the floor. She then shot Miller's other ankle.

'Goodbye, Doctor.'

'No, no, no... you don't understand what will happen to me.'

Danni put her gun into her trousers and opened the door. As she does, Miller began to scream at her.

'You stupid bitch, I will kill you and everyone else. This is your fault.'

Danni looked back at him and shut the door. She calmly walked down his steps and began the walk home.

## **20**

Danni stood at the empty Waterloo Underground stop. She listened to the screeching trains and felt the cooling breeze that made the rubbish crawl and the paper of the newspapers on the dirty tiled flooring throb. As she stared down the gaping black hole of the tunnel, she heard a high pitched sound come closer to her left ear. As she looks to her left, she saw a small fly flying next to her ear. It was miniscule. She stared at it and blew it away.

She looked to her right and a tramp stood directly in front of her. Danni jumped at the shock and shivered. She shuffled away from him. He held out his hand.

‘I don’t have any money, go away.’

Danni pushed past him; as she does, the train pulled into the stop. The empty train screeched as it came to a stop. The doors clanked open and Danni stepped into a carriage with a flickering light. She sat down and waited for the train to pull away.

A screech emanated from the running gear and the train began to move. The tramp stared through the window, his eyes were bloodshot.

Danni took out her turquoise iPod and headphones. She folded her right leg over her left and moved her right leg to the beat of the song.

As she looked around at the carriage’s line map and posters, two of the posters stood out to her.

The first poster was a picture of Miller titled “Missing, Michael Miller.” with a picture of him underneath.

The next poster grabbed Danni’s attention more. She stood up and held onto one of the yellow bars secured throughout the carriage and pulled herself towards the poster on the rickety train.

Standing in front of the poster and holding onto the bar above the double doors, she looked at the poster. “A message from Sarah Williams. Hello everybody, due to unforeseen circumstances, I will be taking over as the leader for the virus case. My aim is to keep everyone in London safe and to stop the virus from spreading.”

Danni laughed as she looked at the poster, but was distracted as she saw somebody in the next carriage. Danni stepped into the middle of her carriage and looked straight through the glass of the door into the next. She saw a female walk toward the door. She took her headphones from her ears and stared.

Danni paused as she heard shuffling feet and a low growl behind her. She turned around to see Miller staring at her; Smith was behind him.

‘Shit!’ Danni said.

Smith growled louder and Miller stared at Danni. His eyes were dark red, his skin was blotchy and blood smeared his body from head to foot. He had on the same shirt he had been wearing when Danni shot him. His feet were crooked and his ankles looked *wrong* somehow.

Miller growled again then snarled ‘Hello.’

‘You can talk?’ she said.

‘Yes.’ Miller laughed; his laugh was deep and it occasionally cut out. He coughed and spat black liquid; blood dribbled from his mouth.

Suddenly the train braked, throwing Danni down the length of the carriage. She slid past Smith and Miller who stood on the seats holding the support rails. Danni smashed headfirst into the wall at the end of the carriage, knocking her almost senseless.

Danni looked to the opposite end of the carriage and saw that the person who had been on the other side of the door had entered. The lights flickered and the part of the carriage that the other person stood in went dark.

Miller and Smith jumped off the seats and Smith bolted towards Danni. She stayed down. She lay on her back and kicked Smith's ankle, breaking it with a sickening snap. She kicked both his legs as hard as she could, he dropped like a stone. Danni rose and kicked him in the stomach. She put her right arm across his chest, grabbed his chin and cheek with her left hand and jerked his head around to snap his neck. His body went limp and she dropped him to the ground.

Miller unfolded his arms and clapped slowly. Danni approached him with her guard up.

'He'll be alive soon.' Miller said.

'How can you talk?'

Miller laughed. 'I've been infected all this time.' Miller struggled as he was caught by a coughing fit. He tried to speak but it was impossible to understand him when he was coughing up blood. He stopped coughing at last and said, 'My eyes have always been dark; I'm surprised you didn't notice my pupils. The cure didn't work for me; it just held the virus off.' Miller laughed again but it was interspersed with choking. 'I have to inject the cure every two hours otherwise I'd change. In my house, you injected me with the virus to make it even stronger and now...' Miller coughed, smiled, and blood trickled from his mouth. His grin revealed his blood-stained teeth. 'Now I'm unstoppable. You left me, I couldn't get to the cure to try and stop it.'

Miller grabbed Danni's arm and he threw her along the carriage. She slid down the plastic flooring and stopped at a woman's feet.

As she looked up, past the woman's black heels and skirt and past her white blouse, she saw Sarah's face looking down at her.

Miller began to laugh; Smith was standing again.

'They've always said that the government is corrupt.' Miller laughed.

Sarah walked past Danni and stood next to Miller.

'Smith, kill this interfering bitch.' Sarah said.

Smith growled. His eyes bled and he chewed his sore lips.

'Sarah, why are you doing this? You've stopped the experiment and you killed the infected.'

'Who said I stopped the experiment?' Sarah said. She laughed and Miller smirked. 'The experiment is still underway and the infected people are still alive, waiting to be released into London to infect everyone.'

Miller opened the double doors, allowing Sarah to step out of the carriage. Danni made a run for the door but Miller punched her in the stomach and pushed her back into the carriage. She fell onto her back, clutching her stomach. Miller stepped onto the tracks and forced the double doors shut.

Sarah and Miller ran through the tunnel.

Danni stood and faced Smith. He snarled and roared. His eyes were red and his face was twisted in anger and torment; he charged at Danni.

## **The End**

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## **Acknowledgments**

I would firstly like to thank you, the reader, for buying a copy of this book. I hope you enjoyed it.

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- *T. J. Blake*

## **The Author**

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